

Migration and Beyond: Continuing relationship between Kinan area in Japan and northern Australia

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Abstract

In most of the migration studies, the focus is on migrants and their descendants. When temporary migrants return to their original country, the effect of their migration to connect their original and receiving countries has not been approached academically. In this research note, I would like to examine the various relationships and ties developed after migration was considered 'finished'. From the 1870s to 1960s, Japanese migratory workers worked in northern Australia, namely Thursday Island and Broome, in industries such as pearl shelling. With the outbreak of World War II, most of them were interned and eventually deported. However, the ties and relationships they developed through migration have continued and led to another ties and relationships in various ways. By looking at this, I suggest rethinking the framework of 'migration' itself.

1. Introduction

In most of the migration studies, the focus is on the migrants and their descendants. In cases of temporary migrants such as return migrants, temporary labour migrants and sojourners, the phenomenon of migration is often considered to 'finish' when the migrants return to their countries of origin on permanent basis, although there has been the research on the ex-migrants after they return to their countries of origin focusing on the issues such as their re-integration into their original society, usage of remittances, and memory and nostalgia (e.g. Abella and Lonnroth 1995, Boyle et al 1998, Castles 2001). However, migration has much broader effects on the migrant's society of origin and the receiving society. In this research note, I would like to look at the ongoing relationship between northern Australia and Japan, especially the Kinan area, a southern part of Wakayama prefecture, where many Japanese migratory workers were originally from¹⁾. Between the 1870s and the 1960s, many Japanese migratory workers came to northern Australia to work in the pearl-shell and sugar industries. Japanese became predominant in the pearl shell industry, with its centres in Thurs-

1) Japanese migratory workers in northern Australia were mainly from certain areas of Japan, which include Kinan area in Wakayama prefecture, Mie prefecture, and Ehime prefecture. About the details see, for example, Ogawa (1976), Bain (1982), Jones (2002).

day Island in the Torres Strait and Broome in Western Australia, and almost took over the industry (Beckett 1987: 57–59, Ganter 1994: 99–150, Reynolds 2003: 89–98, 131–135). With the outbreak of World War II, most of the Japanese workers were interned and eventually deported. The history of their migration is usually considered to ‘have finished’ at this point (cf. Shigematsu 2007). However, the human relationships they developed in northern Australia have continued and generated other relationships in various ways. By examining them, I would like to consider the effects of the migration which go beyond the migration itself. The data I use here is based on the literature and my short term field research in Kushimoto town in Kinan area. I will mainly deal with the relationship between Thursday Island and Kinan area and the migration for the pearl shell industry though I will sometimes cite the sources regarding some other areas.

2. Brief history of the pearl-shell industry and Japanese migratory workers in northern Australia

The commercial pearl-shell industry started in the northern part of Western Australia in the 1860s, and in Queensland in the 1870s. In the beginning, Aboriginal people and Pacific Islanders were used as divers. However, there was a serious shortage of labour supply. At the same time, Japan was going through the Meiji restoration and had abandoned the national isolationist policy. The first recorded Japanese pearl shell diver arrived in Torres Strait in 1876. Then, from the 1880s, pearl lugger owners started to recruit Japanese to work on their boats. By 1894, the Japanese became the largest ethnic group in the pearl shell industry in Torres Strait. Within four years, they outnumbered the European population on Thursday Island 619 to 608 (Meaney 1999: 53). By this time Japanese worked not only as divers, but also owned and rented pearl luggers and engaged in their own businesses. In 1897, it was reported that one-third of the Thursday Island pearling fleet was either owned or rented by Japanese. The Japanese population in Broome also grew and became predominant in pearl shell industry. Just before World War I, Broome had over 1,100 Japanese indentured workers – the biggest Japanese community in Australia (Meaney 1999: 55). Despite laws which banned aliens from obtaining pearling licenses and the White Australia Policy – from which the pearl shell industry was exempt – Japanese divers continued to work in the pearl shell industry and remained significant in the industry until the outbreak of World War II. With the outbreak of World War II, most of the Japanese people in Australia were interned and eventually deported. Small numbers of Japanese people went back to northern Australia. Nagata (1999: 34) counted that 38 Japanese repatriated to Thursday Island. The attempt to revive the industry after the war did not live long. The pearl shell industry practically ceased in the 1960s. Shell buttons were replaced by plastic buttons (e.g. Bain 1982, Ganter 1994, Hokari 2003, Meaney 1999, Nagata 1996, 1999, 2004, Ogawa 1976, Sissons 1979, see also Jones 2002).

3. After the migration

Although most of the Japanese migrants returned to Japan after World War II, some remained in Australia. Some came back shortly after World War II and eventually stayed in Australia. Little research has been conducted how they (re)constructed themselves as a community (as an exception, see Nagata 1999). Currently, the majority of Japanese migrants living in Australia are the people who migrated after World War II and their descendants. They do not have much contact with the earlier Japanese migrants and their descendants, who were often considered to be 'well-integrated' in Australian society (cf. Ganter 2006: 165, 171). However, various kinds of relationships which connect Japan and Australia derived from this earlier migration. The following examples are far from comprehensive but varied enough to warrant questioning the complex, broader effects of migration.

i) Family and kinship ties

Japanese migrants who have stayed in Australia pre or post World War II often keep contacts with their family members and friends in Japan. They sometimes visit Japan to see them. One of the most well-known persons among these migrants is Tomitaro Fujii, who was an ex-pearl shell diver and lived on Thursday Island (Anau et.al 1986, see also Shiba 1980). He married a local woman and had several children. Although he visited Japan only a few times after World War II, his children, their spouses and their children keep contacts with Fujii's relatives in Japan and occasionally visit them. Recently, Fujii's second daughter planned to write a biography of her father and visited Kushimoto town, where Fujii is originally from (e.g. Loco Net 2008)².

On the other hand, it is not only the formal family relationship which Japanese migratory workers had with the local people. Lucy Dann was born in Broome from her Aboriginal mother and Japanese father. Her father went back to Japan after her birth. In 2000 she visited Japan and had a reunion with her father and met her half siblings (Dann 2003, Kanamori 2003). Her case is not unique. Other Japanese migratory workers had sexual non-marital relationships with local people. In some cases, children from these unions were taken to Japan by their fathers. In other cases, they were left in Australia like Lucy (e.g. Ganter 1999, 2006: 177). It is not rare that some of them visited Japan to see their fathers.

ii) The cultured pearl industry

In 1960, several pearl-culture licenses were issued at Thursday Island. The cultured pearl in-

2) Tomitaro Fujii is originally from an area called 'Arita' in Wakayama prefecture, which is a part of contemporary Kushimoto town.

dustry relied on Japanese techniques and employed Japanese technicians. They were mostly joint projects between Japan and Australia. In 1956, the Nippo Pearl Company started its pearl farms in Kuri Bay in Western Australia. In Torres Strait, two cultured pearl companies established their farms at Friday Island and Escape River (east coast of Cape York) in 1960. Several other companies followed. By 1964, twelve pearl-culture stations operated out of Thursday Island. Anau et al (1986: 31) write, 'The cultured pearl offered new hope and employment for the pearling industry'. However, Ganter (1994: 226) notes that the expansion of the industry was limited because of the scarcity of live pearl-shell. In 1970, the oil tanker *Oceanic Grandeur* struck an uncharted reef. The oil spill was treated with a detergent and soon after that, the pearl-culture farms suffered huge oyster mortalities from a rare disease. A causal link between the accident and the epidemic disease could not be established, but only two pearl farms survived the epidemic. By the early 1970s, the pearl farms at Albany Pass, Horn Island and Good Island had closed down. Today, only one pearl industry operates on Friday Island³). Anau et al. (1986: 31) write that cultured pearl industry offered 'a brief hope' in the Torres Strait (see also Matsumoto 2002).

Ganter (1994: 225) writes that at the beginning of the cultured pearl industry, several pearl-shellers 'helped to establish pearl-culture farms in junior partnership with overseas investors'. She only named some non-Japanese figures. Some Japanese technicians and managers also worked in Torres Strait. Ganter (1994) did not write of the link between them and Japanese pearl-shellers. However, Tomitaro Fujii, formally or informally, worked with some cultured pearl companies using his local knowledge and network. He officially worked with one cultured pearl company to recruit and organise local workers. Other companies, though they were not officially associated with Fujii, also relied on him to organize local workers and deal with conflicts between them. As a Japanese person with local knowledge of people and pearl-shelling, Fujii worked as a mediator for the cultured pearl companies. This demonstrates the effect of the initial wave of migration on successive industries.

iii) History of researchers

From 1975, a team of Japanese geographers, led by Professor Yabuuchi of Kansai University, began their research on the Torres Strait Islands. The results of their research were published in academic journals and other media (e.g. Matsumoto 1977, Oshima 1983, 1977, Shimada 1977, Sugimoto 1977, 1978, Yabuuchi 1977). Most of the researchers in this team have already retired. However, one professor at a Japanese university is still studying the Torres Strait Islands. He not only works academically, but also is in contact with the Japanese migrants and their family in Torres Strait as well as their family members in Kinan area. When Tomitaro Fujii's second daughter and her family visited Japan, this professor as well as another Japanese PhD student helped to or-

3) The cultured pearl industry has been more successful in Western Australia (cf. Ganter 1994: 227).

ganize their visit.

Some Australian researchers such as David Sissons and Regina Ganter visited Kinan area for their research on Japanese pearl-shell divers. Their works became important sources for Japanese academics and others who are interested in the Japanese migratory workers and facilitated their research activities (e.g. Shiba 1980, Hokari 2003). Sissons helped some Japanese researchers such as Kyuhara, mentioned in the next section, to do research in Australia.

iv) Memorials and graves

Together with Professor Yabuuchi's team, Shuji Kyuhara, a high school teacher in Kinan area, visited Torres Strait Islands to do research on the Japanese migratory workers. After his research, he planned to build a memorial for the Japanese migratory workers who died in the Torres Strait on Thursday Island. This project involved not only Kyuhara and the ex-Japanese migratory workers. Making the memorial, shipping it to Australia, and having a ceremony of its establishment involved people working in various organisations such as pearl-shell companies in the Torres Strait Islands, Australian Embassy in Japan, Queensland State government, Kushimoto town office and council, and Wakayama prefectural government. Tomitaro Fujii, a Japanese manager of a cultured pearl company on Thursday Island, and Professor Yabuuchi were also involved in this process. The memorial was established in 1979. The part of the process such as a memorial service was broadcast by Japanese and Australian media. Today the memorial is one of the tourist attractions on Thursday Island. A memorial with the same shape was established in Kushimoto town later (Kyuhara 1986).

v) A novel writer, journalist, and photographer

In 1980, a well-known Japanese writer, Ryotaro Shiba published a book 'Mokuyo-to no Yakai (a night party on Thursday Island)'. Among other stories, this book includes a story, which has the same title as the book. In this story, after listening to the stories of his friend's two uncles in Kinan area, both of whom used to be pearl-shell divers on Thursday Island, Shiba visited Thursday Island. With the help of two Japanese people working on Thursday Island, 'Kano', who used to work in a marine products company and was to start his own business, and 'Muroguchi', who was working in a cultured-pearl company, Shiba met 'Tomisaburo Fujii', who used to be a pearl-shell diver. This 'Tomisaburo Fujii' is almost certainly 'Tomitaro Fujii'. The latter half of the story is about Tomisaburo Fujii's life, his wife, who was from Thursday Island, and the life on the contemporary Thursday Island (Shiba 1980). It is mostly faithful to the historical facts and probably the most well-known book about the Japanese pearl-shell divers written in Japanese. When Tomitaro Fujii was awarded the Order of Culture, his name was mistakenly written as 'Tomisaburo' in the letter of notice.

In 1986, a journalist, Fujio Nakano published a book, 'Mari to Masatora'. It is about a Japanese pearl-shell diver, Masataro Okumura (called 'Okamura Masatora' in Australia), who was originally from Taiji town in the Kinan area and worked in Broome since 1951, and his wife Mari, who was a local Aboriginal woman. This book is well researched and has rich background information on the contemporary situation of Japan, Australian Aboriginal issues and the ambivalent relationship between Japanese migratory workers and Australian Aboriginal people (Nakano 1986). However, although Nakano is an award winning journalist, this book is not so well known as to Shiba's (1980).

Mayu Kanamori is a photographer, who was born in Japan and migrated to Australia. She met Lucy Dann mentioned above in 1999 and helped her to find and reunite with her father who lived in Taiji town. As the result of Lucy's trip to Japan, Lucy and Mayu made a slide show, *The Heart of the Journey*, which is a documentary of Lucy's journey. This slide show was exhibited in various places in Australia and Japan from the year 2000–2003 (Dann 2003, Kanamori 2003, 2008).

These works made the novel writer, journalist, and photographer to visit Kinan area and northern Australia and collaborate with local people. Their works were made public and made others interested in the issue, which led them to visit places such as Broome and Thursday Island. As Shiba's work (1980) probably, although unintentionally, made the name of Tomitaro Fujii mistaken, the effects of these works on extending the relationship between places are difficult to measure but should not be ignored.

vi) Visiting graves and sister city relations

In 1993, led by the then mayor of Kushimoto town, a group of seventeen people visited Japanese graves on Thursday Island. Most of them had their relatives' graves on Thursday Islands who used to work in the pearl shell industry. Some of them themselves were pearl shell divers. Together with them, the mayor, the chair of the town council, four town councilmen, and a town office employee of Kushimoto town, Nishimuro prefectural office manager and a clerical employee⁴), and a delegate from Kushimoto high school as well as Kyuhara, joined this visit. On Thursday Island, The chairman of the Torres Strait City Council, the local high school principal, and some Japanese residents of Thursday Island held a welcome party. At this time, they tried to establish exchange student system between Kushimoto high school and Thursday Island high school, although it did not work (Kushimoto town office 1993). The second group visit to the Japanese graves on Thursday Island was in 2007. This group had thirteen people and led by the then mayor of Kushimoto town.

4) Nishimuro is supposed to be 'gun', which is an administrative body between town and the prefecture ('ken' in Japanese). However, in 'Koho Kushimoto' which I used as a source here, it is written as 'Nishimuro Ken' (cf. Kushimoto town office 1993). Following this, I translate it as 'Nishimuro prefecture'. Currently, Kushimoto town is under 'Higashimuro gun'.

As well as the bereaved, a town office employee, a Buddhist monk, a Japanese student who helped Tomitaro Fujii's second daughter's visit to Japan, and some media staff joined. They visited the graves and had a memorial ceremony together with the local Japanese residents and the Torres Strait City mayor and City councilors (Kushimoto town office 2007). In the same year, the association of the bereaved was established in Kushimoto town. They are currently taking care of the memorial in Kushimoto town.

In 2006, Torres Strait City asked to establish a sister city relationship with Kushimoto town. This sister city relationship has not been established yet. However, the Kushimoto town office supported the project of visiting graves in terms of financial and organizational issues. The interaction between Kinan area and Thursday Island has already involved the public administration system. Broome and Taiji town established a sister city relationship in 1981. In 2006, The then mayor, the chair of the town council, and a town office employee of Taiji town were invited for 'Shinju-Matsuri (pearl festival)' in Broome. The mayor gave speech at the opening ceremony. During the festival, several exchange programs such as an exchange exhibition between Whale museum in Taiji town and Broome historical museum, and a TV conference of Taiji and Broome elementary school were held. In 2007, some delegates from Taiji visited Broome to explore the possibility of educational and cultural interaction (Taiji town office 2006, 2007)

4. Further topics

As we saw above, the ties created by the original migration consequently made other people to develop ties between Australia and Japan. It has spread beyond the families and relatives of the original migrants to people such as novelists, researchers and town office employees. The migration generated various kinds of interests and relationships. These ties are beyond what has been considered and studied in the framework of 'migration' and affected people's everyday life in Japan and Australia.

It should be also noted that not only people traveled between Australia and Japan. Things such as the memorial and stories such as the one of Tomitaro Fujii also made the journey. In the era of globalization, Marcus (1995) suggests the possibility of multi-sited ethnography and several 'tracking strategies' such as 'following people', 'following things', 'following metaphor', 'following story', 'following biography', and 'following conflict'. I would like to emphasize that in all those issues different kinds of ties are interwoven with each other. For example, the cultured pearl industry used the ties Tomitaro Fujii developed with the locals through his migration as well as the ties he had had in Japan (cf. Shiba 1980). The memorial stone's travel involved not only Kyuhara and Japanese migrants, but also their families, researchers, and those working in the various administration systems (Kyuhara 1986). What I cited above is only the tip of the iceberg. One tie has led to

another. And these ties and the travel of people and things affect the local people's everyday life. Having seen these connections, I would like to question if 'migration' can be considered 'finished' after most of the migrants return to their original country. How can we understand and analyse these various ties developed after migration is supposed to have 'finished'? It is clear that we must develop a theoretical methodology to grasp the broader 'effects' of migration in this age of increasing travel and globalization.

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