

**Epilogue:**  
**Three Views of Oceanic Japan<sup>†</sup>**

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*The View from 1929 (i): Where's Japan?*

Oceanic historians have treated Japan as often as historians of Japan have engaged with the ocean: that is, remarkably rarely. As Alexis Dudden explains in this volume, Japan studies “are still bound by terrestrial over oceanic ways—ironic for an island nation.” It is ironic indeed because Japan can readily be described (as Paul Kreitman does, channeling Epeli Hau’ofa) as a sea of islands, a diverse assemblage of lands linked and formed by their surrounding waters. In the wake of UNCLOS, that oceanic expanse comprises the world’s eighth largest Exclusive Economic Zone, most of it spanning the ocean. The ocean bulks correspondingly large in the global imagination of Japan: Hokusai’s *Great Wave* is an icon of Japanese art; popular images place seafood at the heart of Japanese culture; and Japan’s major contribution to mythology is a monster from the deep, Godzilla. Moreover, it has had two heads of state, Emperor Hirohito and Emperor Naruhito, trained respectively in marine biology and maritime history.<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, did the great wave of scholarship on oceanic history take so long to reach Japan? This conundrum has deep roots that are both historical and historiographical. One way to suggest the historical origins of the absence is to go back for a moment— not for the last time in this afterword—to the pivotal year of 1929. Only twenty-five years before, Japan had claimed naval pre-eminence and amazed the world by defeating Russia’s navy in the Russo-Japanese War. Its commercial fishing fleet was already becoming the world’s largest and its reach was soon

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<sup>†</sup> Forthcoming in *Oceanic Japan: The Archipelago in Pacific and Global History*, ed. Nadine Heé, Stefan Hübner, Ian J. Miller and William Tsutsui (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press). For inspiring conversations over many years, I am especially grateful to Alison Bashford, Alexis Dudden, Ryan Jones, Gene Kim, Ian Miller, Jonas Rüegg, Hannah Shepherd, Sujit Sivasundaram, Michael Thornton, and William Tsutsui.

<sup>1</sup> H.I.H. Prince Naruhito, *The Thames as Highway: A Study of Traffic and Navigation on the Upper Thames in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).



Japan's long estrangement from the ocean was genuine though not as absolute as conventional accounts of a country wholly "closed" before Commodore Perry found the key—or broke down the doors—might suggest. In the centuries before the Meiji Restoration, the shogunal state stood aloof from the greater Pacific and from the Indian Ocean even as its encircling waters aided the integration of the archipelago. Japan's reluctance to join the long-distance boat race with other Eurasian polities hardly scuppered maritime innovation: as Jakobina Arch argues, the technological demands of in-shore sailing led to the invention of the shallow-draughted *bekaisen*. Nor was the ocean wholly absent from the Tokugawa imagination: as David Howell shows, reactions to mysterious tales of drifting craft and exotic castaways signified that "Japanese views of the sea were evolving long before Perry first showed up in Edo Bay in 1853." Yet, as the much later Surrealist map indicated, broader mental cartographies, beyond Japan as well as within it, only haltingly assimilated Japan to the wider Pacific. That ocean did not appear on Japanese maps until the late eighteenth century and only became widely domesticated in the mid-nineteenth. Until then, Marcia Yonemoto remarks, Japan was firmly "*in* but not *of* the Pacific".

The lack of oceanic histories of Japan was not a product of Japanese history alone: it was a side-effect of modern historiography itself. History-writing in and about Japan could not escape the fundamental commitments of the historical profession as they had crystallized since the late nineteenth century. From that point almost until our own time, most historians in much of the world have been both anthropocentric and terracentric. They have studied mostly humans rather than non-human creatures and thereby cordoned our species off from nature as a whole. Moreover, they largely confined humans within national contexts defined by borders and rooted in territory. History as a discipline accordingly dealt with pasts that were human and terrestrial, fixed rather than fluid, and in effect horizontal rather than vertical.

It has taken half a century to blur the binary oppositions that bedevil the historian's craft: nature versus culture, non-human versus human, sea versus land. Environmental historians were the first to break the boundary, though they began by tracking changes in the land rather than

currents in the ocean.<sup>2</sup> Even the founding fathers of oceanic history (and they were overwhelmingly men), from S. D. Gotein and Fernand Braudel to K. N. Chaudhuri and Bernard Bailyn had little interest in the sea *qua* sea.<sup>3</sup> They skimmed its surfaces instead of plumbing its depths and, in common with other human-centred historians, treated its non-human denizens more as objects of capture and commerce than as historical subjects in their own right. While historians confronted other “centrisms” such as Eurocentrism or ethnocentrism, terracentrism persisted unremarked and uncontested. It has been left to more recent scholars to put the ocean back into oceanic history and to endow the cod and the whale, the salmon and the sea-cow, with a measure of historical agency.<sup>4</sup> Salt water has proved to be a powerful solvent for enduring analytical binaries.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from marginal differences in national styles and methodological tastes, “terrestrial bias” distorted history along with most of the other human sciences across the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> The great French historian Marc Bloch neatly encapsulated that prejudice in his *Apologie pour l’histoire* (1949), better known in the English-speaking world as *The Historian’s Craft*. There Bloch firmly defined history against the natural sciences on grounds of subject-matter. The history of the solar system, he wrote, was “the province of astronomy” while that of volcanoes was the preserve of geology: both lacked the all-important “human element”. To sharpen his point, Bloch offered an oceanic instance. In 1134, a violent storm opened up a channel on the Flemish coast known as the Zwin, which began to silt up in the following century.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Classically, William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, ed. Peter N. Miller (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Notably, Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific’s Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Bathsheba Demuth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Helmreich, “Nature, Culture, Seawater,” *American Anthropologist* 113 (2012): 132–144.

<sup>6</sup> Melody Jue, *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Trachet, Samuël Delefortrie, Kristof Dombrecht, Jan Dumolyn, Ward Leloup, Erik Thoen, Marc Van Meirvenne, and Wim De Clercq, “Turning Back the Tide: The Zwin Debate in

As long as any blockage of the channel arose from “alluvial deposit, the operation of ocean currents, or, perhaps changes in sea level,” Bloch argued, the Zwin was of no concern to historians. However, when dyking sped up the silting, “the act of society remodelling the soil on which it lives” marked “an eminently ‘historical’ event”. What Bloch termed “the intervention of history” arrived only with human agency.<sup>8</sup> That attitude, elegantly expressed by Bloch, has ruled the historical profession for most of its life-span. As a result, deep-sea creatures were rendered invisible like the water, winds, and waves. They dropped beneath historians’ notice and out of history itself, in Japan as elsewhere, to nourish a more widespread human thalassophobia.<sup>9</sup>

Terracentric historians may see a world in a grain of sand, taking patches of our species’ grounded, bounded past to make claims about a larger history. Oceanic historians find the world in bodies of water. Holism is the name of the oceanic game, as the historian’s craft extends to ever more species and over other dimensions. Chapters in this volume by Toshihiro Higuchi, Takahiro Watanabe, Nadine Hée, and Kjell Ericson exemplify this trend by taking scallops and salmon, tuna and oysters, seriously as subjects with the capacity to intervene in history, through their interactions with humans and as agents in their own right. If an oyster could speak, we might not understand it, but (as Ericson reveals) Kai-lingual can translate bivalve motion into signals that we can comprehend and ultimately weave into history. Similarly, scallops might once have seemed silent but their spawning can also signify and thus be significant for historians.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the movements of marine biota shape human mobility and are in turn shaped by it to

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Perspective: A Historiographical Review of the Medieval Port System Northeast of Bruges,” *Revue du Nord* 413 (2015): 305–321.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, trans. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 23–25.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Jamieson, Glenn Singleman, Thomas D. Linley, and Susan Casey, “Fear and Loathing of the Deep Ocean: Why Don’t People Care About the Deep Sea?,” *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 78 (2021): 797–809.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Michel Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops of St Brieuc Bay,” in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 196–233.

create a history that is dynamic, energetic, and always shifting but where the “human element” alone no longer defines what is, or is not, truly historical.<sup>11</sup>

Oceanic historians attuned to these motions are increasingly constructing a history from below—from below the waves, that is.<sup>12</sup> Although this movement has been most conspicuous in animal history, it also contributes to what has been called the “volumetric turn” in the social sciences.<sup>13</sup> Terrestrial histories are implicitly planar, scanning horizontal expanses but seldom looking up or down from the land to supramundane or subterranean realms. Oceanic history cannot afford to be so superficial. “Ocean and land are connected by the air,” Bathsheba Demuth, remarks, and the air column above matters as much to its circulation as the water column below. Both are populated by creatures and, increasingly, by structures that claim historians’ attention. Stefan Huebner and Gerald Figal argue in their essays that platforms and tetrapods matter as much to the oceanic history of Japan as the animate subjects treated in other chapters. Huebner’s “platform archipelago” exemplifies a vertical history that rises from the sea-bed through the water column and into the air while Figal’s “eco-ontology” of tetrapods extends the three-dimensional space of the Japanese littoral into the water as the effort to defend Japan’s coastline creates novel habitats for sea animals.<sup>14</sup> Horizontalist historians tend to talk about their “field,” a bounded space that can be tilled or tended. Vertically integrated oceanic history demands a better metaphor: the wave. This an encouragement to surf dynamic trends and write history both from above and from below that is at once trans-oceanic and submarine.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, *Oceanic Japan* provides an inspiring model for other historians, oceanic and terrestrial, to combine field

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<sup>11</sup> Nadine Heé, “Negotiating Migratory Tuna: Territorialization of the Oceans, Trans-War Knowledge and Fisheries Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 44 (2020): 413–427.

<sup>12</sup> Ryan Tucker Jones, “Running into Whales: The History of the North Pacific from Below the Waves,” *American Historical Review* 118 (2013): 349–377.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Elden, “Secure the Volume: Vertical Geopolitics and the Depth of Power,” *Political Geography* 34 (2013): 35–51; Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters, “Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33 (2015): 247–264.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Andrew Littlejohn, “Dividing Worlds: Tsunamis, Seawalls, and Ontological Politics in Northeast Japan,” *Social Analysis* 64 (2020): 24–43.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene,” *Comparative Literature* 69 (2017): 32–44.

and wave, surf and turf, into a history that is immersive, amphibious, and what Alison Bashford has helpfully termed *terraqueous*.<sup>16</sup>

*The View from 1929 (ii): Behold, the Sea!*

Even if Japanese historiography has only recently turned terraqueous, Japanese history has long been so. That, at least, is the overwhelming impression *Oceanic Japan* leaves. From Arch's Tokugawa shipbuilders through Howell's and Kären Wigen's teeming imaginative space of the Pacific via the world shaped by steam portrayed by Martin Dusinberre to the turbulent, teeming modern sea of islands of so many other chapters, it should now be impossible—or require some justification—to treat Japan's history with a solely terracentric bias. The Japanese past as it appears here was the product of the interpenetration of land and sea, of what Stefan Huebner calls “the co-existence and co-evolution between the dry and marine habitats,” that could even have political consequences, as Katherine Matsuura shows in her account of the 1868 Kosaka Uprising. Japan's intensive “aquapelagic” environment also led to the overlap of old and new technologies as well as the co-production of new ones.<sup>17</sup> For example, the arrival of steam-shiping in Japan—beginning with a single gunboat in 1862—did not abruptly signal the end of the age of sail: the two maritime technologies co-existed for decades, as Martin Dusinberre and Manako Ogawa's chapters remind us. And if the transition from steam to sail was uneven, so was that from biofuel to fossil fuel: one result of “shifting our focus from black ships to black coal,” is to join the intimately local to the expansively global. As Dusinberre urges, “the ‘oceanic’ is partly a call for historians of Japan to think globally.”

Such extended terraqueous relationships appeared especially starkly in another compelling Surrealist image from 1929, the Japanese painter Koga Harue's *Umi (The Sea)* (fig.

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<sup>16</sup> *Oceanic Histories*, ed. David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Armitage, Bashford, and Sivasundaram, “*Oceanic Histories: Editors' Response*,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 19, 2 (Summer 2018): <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700167>; Bashford, “Terraqueous Histories,” *The Historical Journal* 60 (2016): 253–272.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Hayward, “Aquapelagoes and Aquapelagic Assemblages,” *Shims: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 6 (2012): 1–11.

2).<sup>18</sup> Within a single collage-like picture, Koga compacted images of land, sea, and air, of the human and the non-human, of steam and sail, and of the submarine and the subconscious. The painting defies any linear reading but rotates around multiple axes: the poised, notably Western, “Modern Girl” in her swimsuit on the right echoes the upright stance of the German factory, taken from a contemporary trade magazine, on the left; the archaic sailing-ship on the surface of the sea resonates with the cutaway of a submarine in its depths; giant shrimp swim past shoals of tuna and other fish; birds in flight seem to pursue the zeppelin aloft: throughout, the viewer’s eye makes patterns and connections that blur the lines between *terra* and *aqua*. Koga encouraged such “sliding” between states in a poem accompanying a reproduction of the piece:

Clear and striking watery blue, indigo blue and purple,  
Reality is seen through, land is under the sea  
Sliding objects; sea water; a submarine; a galley  
50° north latitude  
Lady in a sea-bathing suit, who connects all things to the family of fish in the sea  
Seaweeds with a new odor, burst forth.<sup>19</sup>

(“50° north latitude” does not cross the Japanese archipelago but might refer to the division of Sakhalin Island along that parallel after the Russo-Japanese War: it is presumably the line that traverses *Umi*’s picture-plane.) The terraqueous is just such a realm of sliding and slippage, connection and reconfiguration, in which terracentric “reality” is exposed as fluid, land and sea merge, everything “burst[s] forth” freshly for once, and the human remains integral while the water is unignorably central.

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<sup>18</sup> Chingshin Wu, *Parallel Modernism: Koga Harue and Avant-Garde Art in Modern Japan* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), pp. 130–137.

<sup>19</sup> Harue Koga, “Sea” (1931–1932?), quoted in Nagata Ken’ichi, “Koga Harue’s *Sea* (1929) and ‘Soluble Fish’: Proletarian Art, Max Ernst, Bauhaus and the Volte-Face of Machine Aesthetics,” *Aesthetics* (Japanese Society for Aesthetics) 13 (2009): 249–267, at 253.



Fig. 2. Koga Harue, *Umi (The Sea)*, 1929.  
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

As Koga intuited, the ocean does indeed “connect all things”. Without its refractive lens, Toshihiro Higuchi might not have discovered the collision between two models of industrialization, nuclear above and agricultural below the waves, in the struggle between proponents of nuclear energy and cultivators of crustaceans in Mutsu Bay. Likewise, history might have overlooked Takahiro Watanabe’s “fish-bearing forests” where salmon and trees grew together symbiotically, or the forces of urbanization across the Tsushima Strait traced by Hannah Shepherd. “Oceans connect” was the founding slogan of the new thalassology in the late 1990s, as David Howell recalls.<sup>20</sup> In retrospect, it is clear that the original motto reflected the globalizing

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<sup>20</sup> “Oceans Connect,” ed. Kären Wigen and Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Geographical Review* 89, 2 (April 1999); *Oceans Connect: Reflections on Water Worlds across Time and Space*, ed. Rila Mukherjee (Delhi: Primus Books, 2013).

teleology of its time: the world was apparently becoming one, barriers and borders were melting into air, and the fluidity of “liquid modernity” began with, and upon, the ocean as a matrix of integrative processes. Yet as globalization itself has looked more halting and even reversible of late, the promise of that first boosterish phase of oceanic history has ebbed.

Oceans also *disconnect*. Global historians, among whom many oceanic practitioners count themselves, are becoming more interested in friction, interruption, resistance, and blockage in world history. In this vein, Yonemoto shows that, until the middle of the nineteenth century, ship-free Japanese maps “cast the ocean ... as a buffer-zone or even a metaphorical moat protecting Japan”. The oceans are not simple barriers. They have more precise choke-points: closed seas and maritime limits; bays and gulfs, narrows and straits; and pirates’ nests and contested territories such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands or the Kuril Islands debated between Japan and its neighbors. For Japan, moreover, “the ocean has also historically been a site of catastrophe and/or conflict,” as Satsuki Takahashi notes. It has frequently brought natural disaster, hence the evolving science of tsunami research and the aftermaths of Fukushima that Mariko Jacoby and Takahashi cover here. Alongside all these disruptive oceanic factors, there is the brute materiality of maritime traffic itself: it was a container ship registered in Japan, the *Ever Given*, that brought world trade to a halt for six days when it wedged in the Suez Canal in March 2021. The dialogue between connection and disconnection may be unusually prominent in the history of Japan due to of its situation: as Jonas Rüegg rightly insists, “Japan is not an *island* limited to a confined terrestrial world, but rather, an archipelago awash in the ocean,” subject both to its nutrifying effects and its catastrophic consequences.<sup>21</sup> *Oceanic Japan* should alert future historians to the sea’s more general capacity to disunite as much as its power to conjoin.

### *The View from 1929 (iii): Sea Changes*

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<sup>21</sup> See also Jonas Rüegg, “Currents and Oceanic Geographies of Japan’s Unending Frontier,” *Journal of Pacific History* 56 (2021): 296–319; Rüegg, “The Kuroshio Frontier: Business, State, and Environment in the Making of Japan’s Pacific” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2022).

The central question this volume tackles is “how, and when, Japan *became* oceanic,” as Dusinberre puts it. There was no environmental necessity it would become what William Tsutsui has fruitfully called a “pelagic empire” but it did so slowly across the early modern centuries and then more rapidly in the Meiji period and beyond.<sup>22</sup> In light of the new chronology established by this volume, the turn of the 1930s now appears crucial in the redirection of Japan’s energies outward into the ocean, with the burst of shipbuilding, fleet expansion, and industrialization of the sea that rendered Japan world-leading in maritime fishery. One last cultural product might indicate this inflection point. 1929 saw the appearance not just of Koga’s *Umi* but also of Kobayashi Takiji’s *Kani kōsen* (“The Crab Cannery Ship”). As an emblem of how transformative an oceanic approach to Japanese history can be, “The Crab Cannery Ship” would have to be invented if it did not already exist. *Kani kōsen* is at once a gripping tale and a compelling fable, a richly peopled story and a potent allegory. Its propulsive narrative energy derives from the gradually emerging solidarity among a motley crew of workers brutalized by a capitalist manager. These oppressed proletarians labor for insufferable hours in unbearable conditions confined to a “shit-hole”. They witness appalling cruelty, negligence, and inhumanity that force them to revolt. At just the moment they think they have overthrown their oppressor, the organs of the imperial state step in to crush their rebellion and punish its leaders. In case his readers might somehow have missed the argument, Kobayashi pointed the moral in a supplementary note: “This narrative is a page from the history of capitalist penetration into colonial territories.”<sup>23</sup> What could better suggest the vast forces reshaping Japan in an age of rapid economic change and energetic imperial expansion between two great world—and Pacific-wide—wars?

*Oceanic Japan* suggests, even compels, a rather different reading of Kobayashi’s fable. “The Crab Cannery Ship” is usually understood as a classic of Japanese proletarian literature and as a text of early socialist consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Kobayashi’s note further encourages reading his

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<sup>22</sup> William M. Tsutsui, “The Pelagic Empire: Reconsidering Japanese Expansion,” in *Japan at Nature’s Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power*, ed. Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), pp. 21–38.

<sup>23</sup> Kobayashi Takiji, “The Crab Cannery Ship” (1929), in Kobayashi, *The Crab Cannery Ship and Other Novels of Struggle*, trans. Željko Cipriš (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> Matts Karlsson, “The Proletarian Literature Movement: Japan’s First Encounter with Working-Class Literature,” in *Working-Class Literature(s): Historical and International Perspectives*, ed.

novella as an allegory of Japanese empire, and of a specifically territorial empire at that. And yet, as any reader of this volume will immediately recognize, both strands of interpretation overlook the obvious. The setting of his story is a ship, the *Hakkōmaru*. Its main characters are classic foot-soldiers of the army of labor—among them some of the “fishermen farmers” Watanabe introduced us to—but their factory is afloat. They do not produce textiles or other manufactures but process fish. And their place of production is not some huge building, firmly planted on land, but a still bigger vessel, plying the *seas* between the home islands and Kamchatka, following the contours of the expansion of the pelagic empire after the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>25</sup> *Kani kōsen* is certainly proletarian in focus and socialist in intent, and the geography of the work maps the expansive vision of inter-war Japanese imperialism. Yet it is fundamentally, definitively, revealingly, and essentially an *oceanic* work. The only mystery is why that aspect—visible in plain sight and woven into the fabric of the work at almost every point—is often overlooked, and why even Kobayashi downplayed it in favor of allegory and of territoriality.

No doubt the sea was so all-encompassing in Japanese history that, like the water in which a fish swims, it was at once indispensable and invisible. Anything so vast and omnipresent raises equivalent challenges, not least that of how historians might get their arms around something as large and unstable as the ocean. Kobayashi foreshadowed one solution: the ship history, a mode of inquiry into moving vehicles that, as yet, has no equivalent in terracentric studies. (Coach, train, or automobile history, anybody?) Individual ships can be sensitive seismographs for broad historical shifts, by mapping their movements and reconstructing their connectedness, as Martin Dusinger and Brett Walker demonstrate in their compelling accounts of the *Yamashira-maru* and the *Yukikaze*.<sup>26</sup> *Oceanic Japan* provides many similar models for bottling worldwide waters

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John Lennon and Magnus Nilsson, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2020), II, pp. 132–134.

<sup>25</sup> William M. Tsutsui and Timo Vuorisalo, “Japanese Imperialism and Marine Resources,” in *The Long Shadows: A Global Environmental History of the Second World War*, ed. Simo Laakkonen, Richard Tucker, and Timo Vuorisalo (Portland, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2017), pp. 252–253.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Dusinger, *The Shipshape Archive: Migrating Japan into Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Brett Walker, *Unsinkable: The Destroyer Yukikaze and the Pacific War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); for earlier examples, see Robert W. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic

into the pint-pots of articles, dissertations and monographs, from these ship biographies to Alexis Dudden and Jonas Rüegg's contextualizations of the Ogasawara/Bonin Islands to the telling case-studies of mammals and sea-creatures and of *terra* and *aqua* that so richly populate its pages.

Historians, like fish, are constrained by scales. Terraqueous history facilitates a play of scales, between micro- and macro-history, with plenty of "meso-" in between. As this book's dazzling array of essays amply proves, the oceanic turn in Japanese history is a turn for the better. It would be conventional to judge *Oceanic Japan* "ground-breaking" if that did not imply just the methodological terrestrialism this collection decisively confronts: better, then, to call it *wave-making*, both to fit its topic and more accurately to predict what Japan has to offer oceanic history and what oceanic history might yet bring to Japan.

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Books, 2001); Renisa Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law: The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).