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1 Archival Traps

Figure 1.1 Graveyard of the First Hawaiian Church, Kapa‘a. Author's Photo, 2011.

KEIJIRO, KODAMA
ARRIVED
HAWAII, NEI
JUNE 18, 1885
DIED
KAPAA, KAUAI
MEIJI XXIX
JULY 9, 1896

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The Ship

Early on the morning of 17 June 1885, a steamship by the name *Yamashiro-maru* arrived in the Hawaiian port of Honolulu. A government-appointed physician boarded to carry out an all too perfunctory check of the passengers' health – there were nearly 1,000 Japanese labourers in the steerage accommodation – before giving permission for the vessel to dock.

This book follows a single ship to explore such moments of landfall in the Asia-Pacific world.[1] The iron-hulled *Yamashiro-maru* may have been an unremarkable vessel in the global scheme of things, but it steamed the seas in a remarkable age. A century or so before 1885, for example, this particular arrival would have been unimaginable. Japan, according to its most famous European chronicler of the eighteenth century, was all but closed to the outside world.[2] Ships were still powered by wind, their hulls constructed from wood. Japanese sea-faring vessels were neither capable of intentionally crossing the Pacific Ocean nor legally permitted to do so; overseas migration was also prohibited. And halfway across that vast expanse of water which Edo intellectuals labelled not the Pacific but the 'great eastern sea', islanders on the Hawaiian archipelago were only just beginning – after the year 1778 in European calendars – to explore the possibilities raised by their encounters with people from beyond the realm of their ocean-faring memories.[3] In the first decades of the twenty-first century, by contrast, the world is unimaginable *without* the transformations epitomized by the *Yamashiro-maru*'s Hawaiian arrival: that is, long-distance transport infrastructures; labour migrations and transnational families; fossil fuel consumption on an unsustainable scale; and tropes of a Pacific 'paradise' exploited by resource extraction. The

[1] On 'following' in global history, see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', *Past & Present* 242, Supplement 14 (2019): 1–22, especially p. 19.

[2] Engelbert Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*, trans. and ed. Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999); Kaempfer's account was first published in 1727 in English. The fact that a Nagasaki scholar translated the term 'closed country' from Dutch into Japanese in 1801 suggested a more complex reality of knowledge, if not people, permeating tight borders: David Mervart, 'The Republic of Letters Comes to Nagasaki: Record of a Translator's Struggle', *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2015): 8–37.

[3] Marcia Yonemoto, 'Maps and Metaphors of Japan's "Small Eastern Sea" in Tokugawa Japan (1603–1868)', *Geographical Review* 89, 2 (1999): 169–87; David A. Chang, *The World and All the Things upon It: Native Hawaiian Geographies of Exploration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). See also Chapter 4 for a discussion of early modern Japanese representations of the Pacific.

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story of a Japanese steamship thus speaks to the world today as much as to its nineteenth-century context.

At least, such a sweeping overview of Asian and Pacific engagements was the book I originally thought I would write. Inspired by C. A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, and Jürgen Osterhammel's *The Transformation of the World*, I planned a 'global history' in terms of broad brushstrokes and apposite vignettes: in my case, of Japanese contributions to the period Bayly characterized as modernity's 'great acceleration' in the decades either side of 1900.[4] Japan fascinated non-Japanese people in these years, whether in the speed of society's perceived 'Westernization' after the 1868 Meiji revolution, or in the carefully curated image of national 'civilization' – wooden temple reconstructions, gorgeous silk kimonos – presented at world fairs in Europe and North America, or in the supposed anti-colonial vision its victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) constituted in the imaginations of colonized peoples in North Africa and South Asia.[5] My focus on a single steamship, especially on its migrant passengers, was initially intended to complicate these stereotypes by examining the socioeconomic costs of societal transformation during the Meiji period (1868–1912), alternative expressions of Japaneseness on Hawaiian plantations or Singapore streets, and the complex imbrication of overseas migrants with Japanese settler colonialism. And in the pages which follow I indeed address these issues, alongside the wider dynamics of labour, race, and environmental disruptions at the turn of the twentieth century. But the way I do so derives from my realization that the book I wanted to write was *not* a global history in the mode of all-encompassing vistas of modernity and globalization.

One problem was where to begin – a problem which quickly shifted from aesthetics to the epistemologies of archival position.[6] In an earlier age, whose logic still pervaded my historical training in the heart of the British establishment, the geographies of intellectual choice seemed simpler. If you wanted to write about local history, you began with local archives; if you were researching an aspect of the modern nation-state,

[4] C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 456; and Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014 [2009]). Bayly's term lacks the environmental overtones later proposed by J. R. McNeill and Peter Engelke in *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[5] On the latter, see Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Penguin, 2013).

[6] For one example of aesthetic angst about beginnings, see John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (London: Paperman, 1996), pp. 3–10.

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you would at some point end up in national archives. A recent book on 'the birth of the archive' reinforces this basic binary: the author first acknowledges institutions ranging 'from small *city archives* with the charm of improvisation to great *national archives* with sophisticated operations'.[7] But the problem of where or how to conduct *global* history research was not addressed in an older literature on historians' enamoured relationship with the archives;[8] and, as I shall argue, Ann Laura Stoler's crucial insight that colonial archives produce colonial ontologies, or 'categories of things that are thought to exist', has been inadequately pursued in a global history literature.[9] Bafflingly, the canonical works on global history methodologies have overlooked archival considerations, as have interventions on the 'prospect' or 'futures' of the field. Pamela Kyle Crossley went so far as to claim, in her *What Is Global History?* (2008), that 'the essential work of discovering facts and assembling primary history is not the work of those doing global history', while Sebastian Conrad's wide-ranging book of the same title (2016) eschewed global history archives as an explicit object of analysis.[10]

[7] Friedrich, *Birth of the Archive*, p. v (emphasis added).

[8] Arlette Farge, *Le Goût de l'archive* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989): the English translation loses this sense of 'taste of' and 'taste for': Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). See also Harriet Bradley, 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found', *History of the Human Sciences* 12, 2 (1999): 107–22, here p. 110. For ways in which archives were used in early modern and nineteenth-century Europe, see, respectively, Friedrich, *Birth of the Archive*, and Bonnie G. Smith, 'Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century', *American Historical Review*, 100, 4 (1995): 1150–76.

[9] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 4. I address other contributions to the archival literature later in the book.

[10] Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What Is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 3; Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016). The archives are only discussed in passing, and in strictly functional terms – e.g. the need for greater digitization – in Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History', *Journal of Global History* 13, 1 (2018): 1–21. In an explication of why global historians are attracted to notions of network, three leading historians contrast the 'modest' archival footprint of moving artisans, dealers and traders with the 'overbearing archives' generated by states and empires – but they and their fellow essayists offer no methodological discussions on how to mitigate the latter in favour of the former: James Belich, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham, 'Introduction: The Prospect of Global History', in James Belich, John Darwin, Margret Frenz and Chris Wickham, eds., *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1–22, here p. 16. Methodological archival discussions are also absent in two Japanese-language introductions to global history, namely Mizushima Tsukasa 水島司, *Gurōbaru hisutorī nyūmon* グローバル・ヒストリー入門 [An introduction to global history] (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 2010); and Haneda Masashi 羽田正, *Atarashii sekaishi e: Chikyū shimin no tame no kōsō* 新しい世界史へ：地球市民のための構想 [Towards a new world history: Making citizens of the earth] (Tokyo: Iwanami

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But if we accept that the past is a position, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued in his groundbreaking study of power and silence in Haitian history-making, then the physical site of the archive must be a key epistemological consideration in where a ship-centred history should begin, and what form its global dimensions might take.[11] Through histories of passage and landfall, *Mooring the Global Archive* attempts to answer a set of questions concerning the sites of 'global' archives, how they are constituted, and by whom. The standard answer to these questions, if they are asked at all, invokes some variation of the phrase 'multi-sited archival research', as if number and geographical breadth alone conjured up the global. But I shall argue that the production of global history emerges not only in archival breadth or archival silences – important though these are – but in the brackish spaces between archival sites, or between physical and digitized archives; in ontologies co-produced as a consequence of complementary agendas shared by record keepers across great oceanic distances; and also in the historian's imagination – or occasional failure thereof – as they try to bring different source collections into dialogue with each other. Broadly defined in ways I later discuss, 'the archive' disrupts 'the global' and the global reshapes the archive.

Through the heuristic device of the ship, I came to think of this mutual destabilization in terms of 'archival traps'.[12] I lay out three such traps below, all of which I unerringly jumped into as I drafted book beginnings and shapely structures. The first was my hope that the *Yamashiro-maru* could be narrated as a quasi-biographical history, in which a ship's 'life' could be told through moments of birth, death and achievements in-between. The second was my assumption that the global was googleable, such that the profusion of accessible, newly digitized sources might serve as my empirical base. And the third trap lay in the temptation to overlook the material contexts in which the languages of my sources were deeply

shoten, 2014). By the same token, the literature on archives in Japanese tends to overlook the turn towards global history: see, for example, Hosaka Hirooki 保坂裕興, 'Ākaibuzu to rekishigaku' アーカイブズと歴史学 [Archives and the discipline of history], in Ōtsu Tōru 大津透, Sakurai Eiji 桜井英治, Fujii Jōji 藤井譲治 et al., eds., *Iwanami kōza: Nihon rekishi* 岩波講座：日本歴史, Vol. 21 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2015), pp. 181–207.

[11] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015 [1995]), p. 15. My thoughts on position and location are also influenced by Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14, 3 (1988): 575–99.

[12] In my focus on the relationship between archival work and global history narratives, I use 'traps' differently to Arlette Farge, *Allure of the Archives*, pp. 69–78.

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embedded. Like all good traps, their cover was convincing: they led to several sources upon which I draw in future chapters, and they offered insights into how certain actors experienced change in the late nineteenth-century world. But they also led me to problematic narrative places in terms of my aspiration to write global history.

So here are three archival departures whose allure was all too real but whose intellectual logic I eventually came to jettison. Here is an explanation for why a gravestone inscription with the wrong date serves as this chapter's epigraph. And here, along the way, are some background sketches of the late nineteenth-century worlds of Britain, Japan and Hawai'i, between which the *Yamashiro-maru* steamed.

Trap 1: History as Moments of Birth

The most obvious place to begin was the ship's launch in Newcastle upon Tyne: the moment of its official birth. Indeed, one of only three surviving photographs of the *Yamashiro-maru* (to my knowledge) document this christening ceremony, in January 1884. On a temporary wooden platform at the base of the vessel's vast bow, around two dozen dignitaries pose for the moment of celluloid exposure (see Figure 1.2). The woman at the centre, Lady Margaret Armstrong (1807–93), wears a white fur cape; everyone else's overcoat is of a more sombre hue. The six Japanese men in the group sport top hats.[13]

Though a rare enough gathering to be worthy of a photograph, Japanese statesmen and businessmen had in fact been coming to the north-east of England for more than two decades by the time of the *Yamashiro-maru*'s launch. Back in 1862, the Tokugawa shogunate, weakened by the domestic unrest and foreign encroachment that would culminate in the 1868 Meiji revolution, had sent overseas embassies to Europe and Qing China, to build on the work of a similar mission to the United States in 1860.[14] To mark the ambassadors' arrival in 'our own neighbourhood' as part of their European tour, the *Newcastle Daily Journal* offered a summary of the region's historical achievements – in the modest prose typical of Victorian Britain:

[13] The Japanese attendees and various other dignitaries are listed in 'The Local Shipbuilding Trade', *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 14 January 1884 (accessed in Newcastle City Library). Mori Arinori is incorrectly named as 'Joushi Mari', along with his wife, 'Madame Mari', who officially named the ship.

[14] The classic account of the US-bound mission is Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States (1860)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); for more recent scholarship, see Natalia Doan, 'The 1860 Japanese Embassy and the Antebellum African American Press', *Historical Journal* 62, 4 (2019): 997–1020.

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Figure 1.2 The launch of the *Yamashiro-maru*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 12 January 1884. Courtesy of Newcastle City Library, Local Studies Collections.

Here in the cradle of the locomotive and the railway system; in the home of the High-Level Bridge; in *the birthplace* of the hydraulic engine and the Armstrong gun; and in the great centre of the coal trade, where works for the manufacture of lead, iron, and glass rise up on every hand – where, with one exception, the largest ships in the world have been built, and where alone in England the beauties of Continental Street architecture are worthily rivalled, the illustrious [Japanese] party whom we entertain today will find the real secret of *England's greatness* among nations.[15]

Meanwhile, on the same day as the *Journal* published these breathless claims, the shogunate's embassy to China departed Nagasaki. Upon arrival in Shanghai, many in the group were appalled by what they perceived to be the decline of the Qing empire and the leeching of Asian resources at the hands of the 'barbarian' foreigners. But one

[15] *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 27 May 1862. Cited in Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone Press, 1989), p. 6 (emphasis added).

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attendant knew a good thing when he saw it. In his diary, he sketched an Armstrong twelve-pound cannon, a gun which had been extensively used by British forces against the Qing during the Second Opium War (1856–60). From prior discussions with Portuguese interlocutors in Nagasaki, he already knew that British battleships, armed with great cannons, rendered Britain 'the mightiest country in the world'.[16] Together with the *Newcastle Daily Journal*'s claim to 'greatness', this perception of British 'might' drove the logic which subsequently brought top-hatted men to Newcastle in 1884.

The career of one such man, bearded and standing to Lady Armstrong's right, offered a way to consider the *Yamashiro-maru*'s conception in the early 1880s as part of Japan's pursuit of alleged Euro-American pre-eminence. Mori Arinori (1847–89) grew up in the southern domain of Satsuma, one of the shogunate's historical foes. In 1863, as Japan descended into pro- and anti-Tokugawa civil strife, Mori's home town of Kagoshima was bombarded by British ships as payback for the murder of a British merchant by Satsuma samurai. Armstrong-built guns 'laid the town in ruins'.[17] Awed by the superiority of British military power, the Satsuma domain established a new School for Western Studies in 1864. Mori was one of its first pupils, specializing in English and naval surveying; the school also taught the natural sciences, military strategy, engineering, shipbuilding and medicine. The following year, he was one of fourteen Satsuma students clandestinely sent to study at University College London. During the summer vacation of 1866, Mori and a friend spent time in Russia, travelling first to Newcastle and then crossing on a coal barque to Kronstadt. The intra-European contrasts that he observed during this period led him to insist that in addition to Britain, the key country with which Japan should engage was not Russia but rather America. Mori himself was appointed deputy minister to the United States five years later, in the wake of samurai from Satsuma and other domains establishing the new Meiji state.[18] Following his return to Japan from Washington in 1873, he was

[16] These were the sentiments of Takasugi Shinsaku 高杉晋作 (1839–67), cited in Joshua Fogel, *Maiden Voyage: The* Senzaimaru *and the Creation of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 54 (his sketch is reproduced on p. 84).

[17] Ernst Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan: The Inner History of the Critical Years in the Evolution of Japan When the Ports Were Opened and the Monarchy Restored* (San Diego: Stone Bridge Press, 2006 [1921]), pp. 86–7.

[18] Ivan Parker Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), especially pp. 80–94 for Mori's assessment of Russia. See also Andrew Cobbing, *The Satsuma Students in Britain: Japan's Early Search for the 'Essence of the West'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000).

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one of a group of influential intellectuals who argued for faster Westernization at home. In his 'First Essay on Enlightenment', probably written in the same year, he imagined human development in terms of 'change in man's means of support' – from what he called savage to half-enlightened, and from there to *kaika* 開化, a term traditionally translated as 'enlightenment'. He wrote: 'Once national customs have reached this level [of enlightenment] in some part, countries can construct machines, erect buildings, dig mines, *build ships*, open seaways, produce carriages, and improve highways. Thus will the thousand industries and ten thousand arts burst forth one after another.'[19]

Gazing unsmiling into the camera on the morning of 12 January 1884, the scaffolding of the Low Walker dockyards latticed all around, Mori may have considered Newcastle upon Tyne an epitome of this transformative vision. He was present in one of his last official duties as Japanese Minister to London, a post he had held since 1879. A new public–private enterprise, the Kyōdō Un'yu Kaisha (KUK, or 'Union Steamship Company') had been founded just eighteen months previously in Tokyo to challenge the monopoly influence of the Mitsubishi company and to establish Japan as a major maritime power in East Asia.[20] Company executives, visiting British shipbuilding centres since 1883, had ordered sixteen custom-built steamships for the KUK, and the *Yamashiro-maru*, at 2,490 gross tons, was the first and biggest of the new fleet.[21] It therefore made sense for Mori to attend the ship's launch,

[19] Mori Arinori, 'First Essay on Enlightenment', *Meiroku zasshi* 3 (undated, but probably 1873), in William Reynolds Braisted, trans., *Meiroku Zasshi: Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1976), pp. 30–1 (emphasis added); Mori Arinori 森有禮, 'Kaika dai-ichiwa' 開化第一話 [First essay on enlightenment], *Meiroku zasshi dai-sangō* (n.d.), unpaginated. The characters for 'kaika' literally mean 'open' and 'transform': although 'kaika' has long been translated as 'enlightenment', the unfortunate effect is to impose a set of associations deriving from eighteenth-century European history on a term which speaks to Japan's specific re-engagement with Europe and America in the mid nineteenth century, and to the transformations which men like Mori hoped might result from that re-engagement. See also Sebastian Conrad, 'Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique', *American Historical Review* 117, 4 (October 2012): 999–1027.

[20] William D. Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N. Y. K., 1870–1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1984), pp. 146–9; Kokaze Hidemasa 小風秀雅, *Teikokushugika no Nihon kaiun: Kokusai kyōsō to taigai jiritsu* 帝国主義下の日本海運：国際競争と対外自立 [Japanese maritime transportation under imperialism: International competition and independence in external affairs] (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1995), pp. 175–82.

[21] Japan did not have the dry dock infrastructure at the time to build major ocean-going ships: Nishizawa Yasuhiko 西澤泰彦, 'Meiji jidai ni kensetsu sareta Nihon no dorai dokku ni kansuru kenkyū' 明治時代に建設された日本のドライドックに関する研究 [Official translation: 'A Study on the Dry Docks Built Up in the Meiji Period in Japan'], *Dobokushi kenkyū* 19 (1995): 147–58.

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representing as it did one articulation of the 'level of enlightenment' which he had long hoped Japan would attain. And perhaps the *Yamashiro-maru* was in the back of his mind when he gave his final newspaper interview before departing London a few weeks later. 'People imagine here that Japanese progress during the last ten or fifteen years is a new thing to us,' he explained. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth: for centuries until the Tokugawa shogunate, Japan had taken 'that which is best from all worthy nations with which we [came] into contact'. Japanese strength was epitomized by this 'importation of ideas and institutions from foreign and alien civilizations'. And now, having overthrown the Tokugawa, and bolstered by the knowledge that the imperial dynasty had (allegedly) remained unbroken for 2,500 years, 'it is natural that we should feel a pride in our country – a pride that makes us smile with amusement at the idea that our importation of steam engines, telegraphs, or Parliaments can in any way affect our Japanese heart'.[22]

Such a profile of the most important Japanese dignitary attending the *Yamashiro-maru*'s launch served as one possible template for framing the history of the ship itself. It thus constitutes the first archival trap, namely my initial instinct to anthropomorphize the ship – to assume that the *Yamashiro-maru* was an object whose history could be narrated in the form of a biography, just as historians have written histories of modern Japan through the figure of Mori Arinori.[23] But the problem was that the genre of biography implied a moment of birth and thus, as deployed figuratively in histories of the modern world (or, indeed, the archive), a linear temporality departing from origin points.[24] Such narrative linearity in turn reinforces a universalizing, Enlightenment mode of imagining the modern world, in which 'progress' moved in one direction and as yet unenlightened people, whether they be in Europe's backwaters or

[22] 'The Japanese Ambassador on Public Affairs: An Interview on His Departure from England', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 February 1884 (accessed online through the *British Library Newspapers, Part I* database, 1 October 2011). For extended discussion of this interview, see Alastair Swale, *The Political Thought of Mori Arinori: A Study in Meiji Conservatism* (Richmond: Japan Library, 2000), pp. 82–112.

[23] On object biographies, see I. Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64–91; also Chris Godsen and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', *World Archaeology* 31, 2 (1999): 169–78. For biographies of Mori in English, Hall, *Mori Arinori*, and Swale, *Political Thought of Mori Arinori*.

[24] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008 [2000]), ch. 5, especially his concluding comments on p. 148; Friedrich, *Birth of the Archive*.

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