

# THE NEAR NORTH AND THE DEEP NORTH RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND NORTH QUEENSLAND

This thesis will investigate previously neglected connections between north Queensland and Japan. Prior to WWII, north Queensland had a large population of Japanese immigrants compared to any region in Australia. Many were indentured labourers who worked in the pearling industry as divers or crew, or in the sugar cane industry on plantations or in sugar mills. Some owned businesses such as laundries, grocery stores, and even soy sauce factories as part of their long-term residence in Australia. Their contribution to northern development was significant. However, many of these ties were fractured by WWII. The war most Japanese residents in Australia interned under a 'collar the lot' policy.

## The Japanese Consulate

Townsville was the location of Australia's first official Japanese Consulate. *Kardinia* on Stanton Hill, North Ward, was selected and Nakagawa Tsunejiro opened the Consulate in 1896. *Kardinia* had previously been the property of the Police Magistrate.

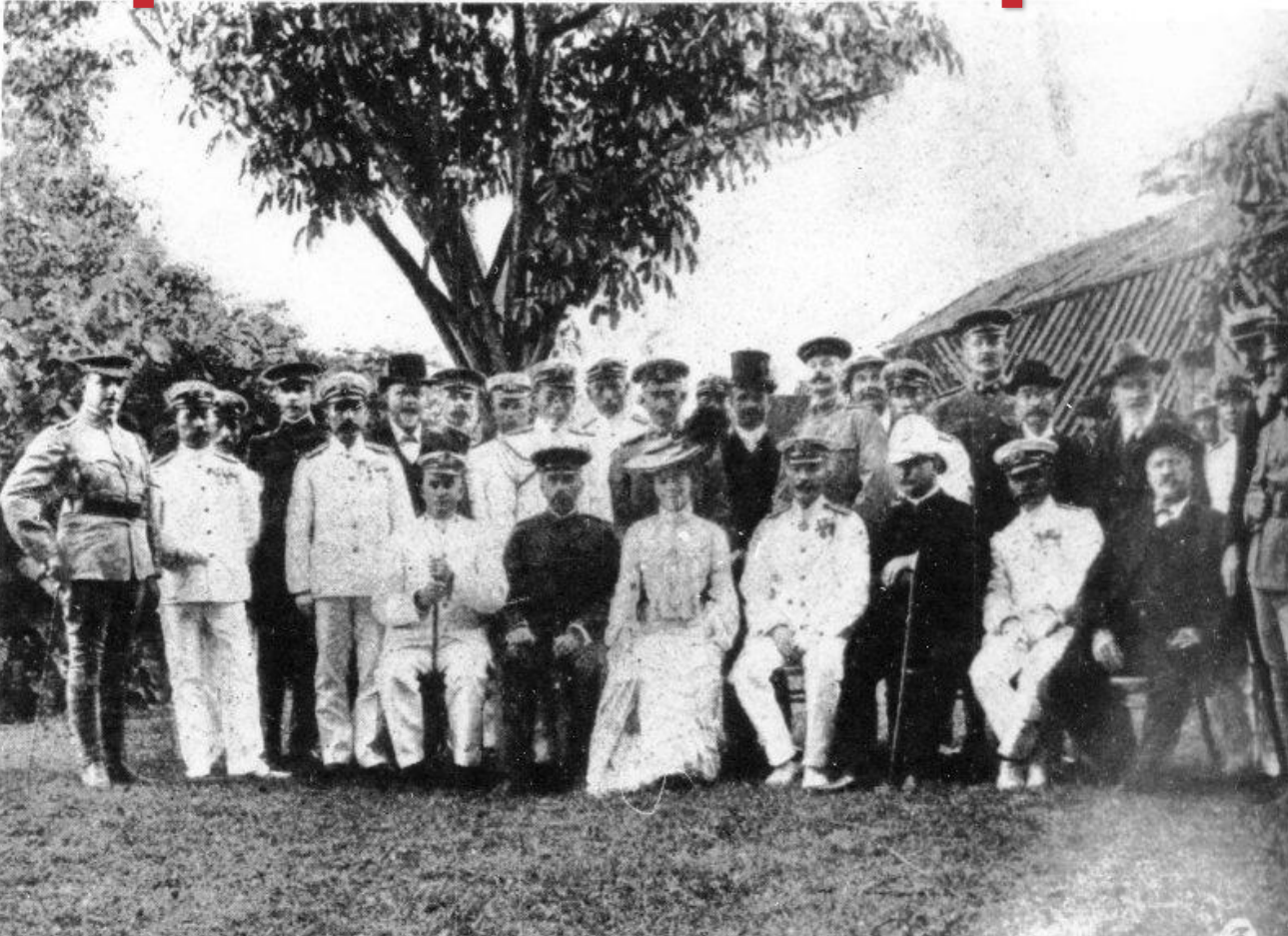


The last Japanese Consul in Townsville, Goro Narita and his wife. c. 1906. Image: Townsville City Libraries, Picture Townsville Collection.



The Japanese Consul to Australia, with his family and staff, during a visit to Townsville. They are outside the former Japanese Consulate *Kardinia* c. 1970. Image: Townsville City Libraries, Picture Townsville Collection.

## Japanese Naval Squadron's Visit



Admiral Shimamura and the staff of the visiting Japanese naval squadron, with citizens of Townsville, in the Queens Gardens, 1906. Image: Townsville City Libraries, Picture Townsville Collection.

The Japanese Naval Squadron visited Townsville in 1906. This was the only non-capital city on its itinerary. The officers and crew were formally received at the Queens Gardens and students of Townsville Central State School sang the Japanese national anthem.

## Pearl Shelling



Mother of pearl is the nacreous inner lining of pearl shells. It was frequently used for making buttons until the 1960s.



Pearling luggers, Thursday Island c. 1918. Image: National Library of Australia. Image number: 28970636860.

Many Japanese worked as indentured labourers in the Torres Strait, particularly on Thursday Island following the 'pearl rush' of the 1870s and 1880s. Pearl shell was the most lucrative product, but trochus (a conical shell that also developed mother of pearl) and bêche-de-mer (sea slugs) were also profitable. Many Japanese came to own their own pearling luggers.

## Sugar Cane Farming

Many Japanese worked as indentured labourers on sugar cane farms and in sugar mills across north Queensland. They negotiated specific working conditions in their favour and were often contracted by larger plantations. Their contract requirements included barracks that were two feet off the ground, the supply of hot water baths, and provision of two new sets of clothes per year.



Two Japanese women on the driveway to the overseer's house at Hambleton Sugar Plantation, Cairns, c. 1896. Image: State Library of Queensland, Digital Collection. Image number: 161114.



Group portrait of Japanese workers on Hambleton Sugar Plantation, Cairns c. 1896. Image: State Library of Queensland, Digital Collection. Image number: 171507

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