

**FEATHERS, FERTILIZER AND STATES OF NATURE:  
USES OF ALBATROSSES IN THE U.S.-JAPAN BORDERLANDS**

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## ABSTRACT

States and scientists together produce Nature as a form of magic to assert sovereignty over territory.

The environmental history of the Pacific is usually told as a story of ecological imperialism, in which unsustainable Western consumption habits resulted in extractive economic processes that degraded both the people of the Pacific and their environment. This declensionist narrative relies on a set of binaries - Culture versus Nature, invaders versus indigenes - that fail to capture the fluid political economy of a rapidly globalizing world. Instead, this study charts the various ways in which sovereignty has been produced and reproduced in the North Pacific since the mid-nineteenth century. Rather than narrate the despoliation of a pristine wilderness by human activity, it focusses on the manner in which our understanding of the Pacific as wilderness has been historically constructed, often in tandem with the very activities it criticizes, and mobilized for political ends.

American and Japanese entrepreneurs began to value North Pacific islands as sources of guano and plumage, and lobbied their governments to annex them as sovereign territory. At first, sovereignty was most effectively asserted simply by inhabiting islands and exploiting their resources. This exploitation rendered bird islands newly accessible to ornithologists, who catalogued their biodiversity in a manner that portrayed them as unspoiled wilderness space. After the annexation of Hawaii, the U.S. government began evicting Japanese hunters from Pacific islands in the name of wildlife protection. Meanwhile in Japan, agronomists mobilized Liebig's soil chemistry to argue that the nation faced a critical nutrient deficit, that

could be remedied by annexing new islands for development as guano mines. After defeat in World War II, Japanese ornithologists pushed their government to adopt American notions of wildlife conservation - to show reintegration into the international community, but also to reassert Japanese sovereignty over offshore islands. Conserving nature also serves to conserve sovereignty.

KEYWORDS: sovereignty, guano, plumage, wildlife conservation, biodiversity, ornithology, wilderness, frontier, territory, colonialism, migration, political ecology, environmental history, sustainability, ecological imperialism, global history, international relations, William Cronon, Richard Drayton, Stuart Elden, Lisa Ford, Bruno Latour, Adam McKeown, Stanley Tambiah, Pacific, Hawaii, Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute.

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# Islands Annexed to the Empire of Japan, 1862-1945



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FEATHERS, FERTILIZER AND STATES OF NATURE  
Uses of Albatrosses in the U.S.-Japan Borderlands

# INTRODUCTION

## Why Care About Albatrosses?



**Figure 0.1: Chris Jordan, “Midway: Message from the Gyre”**

Source: CNN.com, “[Plight of the albatrosses: choking on plastic waste](#)” (4 November 2009)

Within the pantheon of threatened megafauna, the albatross inhabits a distinguished niche. If it has been latterly over-shadowed by the whale, the panda or the rhinoceros, its pedigree is nevertheless more venerable than any of these. In fact the charisma of the albatross predates the modern wildlife conservation movement. Incarnated in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous poem, the albatross was the original avatar of the wilderness: a creature whose ill-treatment provoked the wrath of that "tutelary spirit... who bideth by himself / In the land of mist and snow", and so brought judgement raining down on man.

Today, ecologists and conservationists venerate the bird as an apex predator whose population fluctuations can be monitored as a proxy for the overall health of oceanic ecosystems.<sup>1</sup> The albatross is thus quite literally a "canary in the coal-mine": a phrase that resonates deeply within the history of wildlife conservation, but also has a much older heritage. The metaphor is a reformulation of Plato's allegory of the prisoners in the cave, who seek to discern the truth by examining the light that bounces off the walls. After all, what else is a conservation ecologist but a modern philosopher who, by examining the entrails of dead birds, augurs the true state of the world?<sup>2</sup>

But albatrosses have been used in other ways apart from as harbingers of ecological catastrophe. The hunting of albatrosses is an ancient practice. Archaeological evidence from midden mounds in the Aleutian Islands suggests that "albatrosses were a major contributor to the avian portion of the Aleut diet...particularly in times of dietary stress".<sup>3</sup> Coleridge's poem

1. B. A. Block, *et al.*, "Tracking Apex Marine Predator Movements in a Dynamic Ocean," *Nature* 475, no. 7354 (2011)

2. Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2004), Kindle location 173.

3. David R. Yesner, "Aleutian Island Albatrosses: A Population History," *The Auk* 93, no. 2 (1976), 277.

was itself inspired by one of the many accounts of European sailors hunting albatrosses whilst at sea, either for food or simply to relieve the tedium of long voyages.<sup>4</sup> Polynesian societies also hunted albatrosses assiduously, not so much for their meat as for their feathers, which were used in ritual adornment and “closely connected with divinity, sacredness and divine genealogies”.<sup>5</sup> Indeed the vulnerability of land-borne albatrosses to human hunters (and other predators) helps to explain why the birds have historically tended to nest on clifftops, remote islands, and other out of the way places.<sup>6</sup> The North Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century was such a place.

Then the human exploitation of albatrosses entered a new phase. The reasons for this change are multiple, but one underlying factor was a dramatic drop in the cost of transportation, which made it more affordable to ship people and cargo over long distances than ever before: between 1850 and 1910 the volume of world trade multiplied tenfold.<sup>7</sup> One result of this dramatic collapse in distance was that the calcified excrement which had accumulated on Pacific bird islands came to be valued as fertilizer, which could be profitably exported for sale to farmers in Europe seeking to intensify their agricultural production. A related development was the emergence of a global market for plumage, driven by a new fashion for elaborate feathered headwear in Paris, London and New York. As a result, albatross colonies in the North Pacific began to be targeted by hunters seeking commercial profit.

4. George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World By the Way of the Great South Sea* (1726)

5. Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (Yale University Press, 2010), 74-76.

6. At the time of writing, albatrosses are known to nest at only one site that is easily accessible from human settlement - at Kaena Point on Oahu, Hawaii. Christopher Pala, “Birds of Kaena Point, Hawaii, Enjoy a Revival Thanks to a Fence” 2012.

7. Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 23.

The growth of these two commodity markets, for guano and feathers, helped to usher in a new phase of human and albatross relations, one which for the most part brought disaster for the albatrosses. For humans the story is more complicated: for some the pursuit of albatrosses yielded great riches or at least a livelihood; for others it ended in destitution or death. The pursuit of albatrosses went hand in hand with attempts to extend state power over the scattered islands of the North Pacific, as governments competed to assert sovereignty over remote outcrops of rock in the ocean that they had hitherto regarded as valueless. At the same time the guano and plumage trades, by drawing albatrosses' nesting grounds into the ambit of the global economy, rendered the birds accessible to sustained study by naturalists for the first time in history. But what, precisely, was the relationship between the material production of guano and feathers on the one hand, and the discursive production of sovereignty and Nature on the other?

### **The Pacific: Wilderness, Frontier or Borderland?**

The Pacific has been seen as a wild place from its conception. Credit for coining the term is almost certainly due to Ferdinand Magellan: the popular story has it that he did so as part of a prayer ceremony conducted after his expeditions' safe passage through the strait that would later bear his name. Magellan had no idea whether the ocean he was about to cross was peaceful or not; we can presume that he was absolutely terrified. The name he bestowed upon it is therefore best understood as an incantation, a prayer of hope for safe passage.<sup>8</sup>

8. Antonio Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation* (Courier Dover Publications, 2012); Joyce E. Chaplin, "The Pacific before Empire, c.1500-1800" in David Armitage and Alison Bashford, *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Magellan's incantation didn't work. He died during a skirmish on a beach in what was not yet the Philippines, and his name for the ocean he failed to traverse did not enter common currency until the latter half of the eighteenth century, as the result of another wave of state-backed expeditions by European explorers.<sup>9</sup> Like Magellan, these explorers carried with them inherited preconceptions of the non-European world as a lost Eden, its inhabitants "noble savages" as yet uncorrupted by contact with civilization, that were particularly influential in shaping the way they portrayed Hawaiian and Tahitian societies.<sup>10</sup> Magellan's prayer that the Pacific would prove placid was transmuted into certainty, to the extent that when Captain Cook also died skirmishing on a beach, a consensus quickly hardened that he had only himself to blame for inciting the innocent islanders to violence.<sup>11</sup>

As we shall see, one of the major purposes of this study is to deconstruct the way in which Pacific space has come to be seen as wilderness in the post-Enlightenment, Romantic sense of the word. But it is also true that people have frequently experienced the Pacific Ocean as "wild" in the original sense, as simply an inhospitable or hostile environment. And not just because the natives could be unfriendly. There was its sheer size for a start. Storms and shipwrecks were common. Sources of potable water were few and far between. Some

9. Oskar Spate has shown how, until c.1750, the Pacific was more commonly known as *la Mar del Sud* or the South Sea, partly a reflection of the fact that what we now know as the North Pacific remained almost entirely uncharted save for a single Spanish galleon route threading between Mexico and the Philippines. This only began to change with the third Cook expedition's survey of Hawaii and the Pacific Northwest coast of America. Spate *South Sea to Pacific*. Oskar H.K. Spate, "From the Archives: 'south Sea' to 'pacific Ocean': A Note on Nomenclature," (1977)

10. Kerry R. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History: The "knowing" of Oceania* (University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 8.

11. *Ibid.*, 15. Today few scholars would be so politically incorrect as to subscribe to such a view of Pacific Islanders. Instead see Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

islands were formed from active volcanos with a tendency to erupt without warning; others were so low-lying as to be submerged completely during tsunamis or tidal waves. Hawaiian newspapers were replete with accounts of whole islands disappearing, swallowed up during a storm: such reports were usually proven to be unfounded, usually a result of a particular ship being unable to locate the island in question, and the hapless captain could expect to be roundly mocked afterwards.<sup>12</sup> But this in turn hints at another way in which people experienced the Pacific. In the immensity of the ocean the islands were so tiny that even tracking them down could be a challenge. At the risk of straying onto the reefs of environmental determinism, the North Pacific could even be suggested as a good example of an unstable, perpetually shifting environment. David Biggs writes of the Mekong River that:

[T]he delta's amorphous, amphibious nature.. serves as an ideal environment for a history of modernization oriented to physical examples of slippage, erasure and rupture. The delta's unsolid surfaces, where it is often difficult to reach solid ground, repeatedly challenge human efforts to build permanent spaces.<sup>13</sup>

The same could just as well be said of the North Pacific, whose vast scale and unstable topography has tended to mock human attempts at long-term settlements. In this sense the North Pacific might be seen as, if not a wilderness, then certainly an environment that is often markedly inhospitable to humans.

It is with this in mind that a cautious case can be mounted for viewing the nineteenth century Pacific as a frontier of sorts. This is a term that has lately (and rightly) been regarded with some suspicion, particularly by the New Western Historians who have argued that it

12. See for example "Princess of Laysan and Olson's Disaster" *The Hawaiian Star*, 11 September 1907.

13. David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (*Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books*) (University of Washington Press, 2012), 6.

implies the continental expansion of the United States was inevitable.<sup>14</sup> American Indians were not mere savages, trapped in a state of nature and fated for oblivion; they frequently and effectively resisted European colonization, often by successfully entering into diplomatic alliances that pitted European colonial states against one another. Clearly if the term frontier is to be deployed safely, it must be flensed of such triumphalist, teleological connotations.<sup>15</sup>

This study will deploy the term frontier to refer to two specific processes. The first is the process by which a global market in labor and commodities expanded to enmesh new people and things. In his history of nineteenth-century Chicago and its hinterland, Cronon uses the term to describe: “the expansion of a metropolitan economy into regions that had previously not been tightly bound to its markets, and the absorption of new peripheral areas into a capitalist orbit.”<sup>16</sup> This description applies just as well to the Pacific as it does to the American West: it was the expansion in global markets for guano and feathers that first sent people scrambling to exploit bird islands. The second process is the one by which frontiers of knowledge expand. Here too, the intention is not to forge a naïve whiggish narrative charting the inevitable improvement of scientific understanding. Rather, attention shall be paid to the networks from which such knowledge was constituted - to the newly extended collectives into which humans and non-humans “find themselves mobilized, recruited, socialized, domesticated.”<sup>17</sup> Knowledge about albatrosses was produced by naturalists, but only through

14. Richard White, Patricia Nelson Limerick and James R. Grossman, *The Frontier in American Culture* (University of California Press, 1994)

15. Kerwin Lee Klein, “Reclaiming the” F” Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern,” *The Pacific Historical Review* (1996)

16. William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1992-05-17) xviii.

17. Latour, *The Politics of Nature*, 38.

access to the birds themselves, which was in turn enabled through collaboration with bird hunters, mining companies and the laborers they employed.

Lest there be any doubt, neither market nor knowledge frontiers only ever move in one direction. Market frontiers can retreat due to commodity price collapses, political interventions (for example tariff barriers or legislation to restrict immigration), or simply because of resource depletion. Guano deposits can run out, and albatrosses become hunted to the point of extirpation. Similarly, knowledge of the natural world must be constantly produced and reproduced anew. The world that scientific knowledge purports to describe is not static, and even the most scientific of truths is as vulnerable to the exogenous shock of a paradigm shift as a commodity chain is to an abrupt market correction.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, this study will not use the term frontier to describe zones of settlement on the edge of polities. Instead it will use the term “borderland”, propounded by the New Western Historians to suggest places where various polities overlapped, either contesting or seeking compromise, but with no obvious victor predetermined.<sup>19</sup> Insofar as it provides a useful contrast to the bordered territorial space that characterizes the contemporary nation state system, the concept of the borderland in fact has broad applicability beyond American studies. Weber provided the classic definition of modern state sovereignty when he defined a state as “that human community which, *within a certain area or territory*... has a (successful) monopoly of legitimate physical violence. [emphasis added]”<sup>20</sup> But new scholarship has

18. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 2d Ed.* (University of Chicago Press, 1975)

19. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104:3 (June 1999)

20. Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (University Of Chicago Press, 2013), 327-329.

emphasized the recency and contingency with which states have asserted sovereignty in specifically territorial terms. Stuart Elden reminds us that at the Westphalia conference, which is commonly held to have inaugurated the modern framework of inter-state relations, rulers asserted sovereignty over human subjects, not over territorial space directly.<sup>21</sup>

Early modern East Asia was also comprised of borderlands. An old perception that the region consisted of hermetically sealed hermit kingdoms has now given way to a new appreciation of the varied and sophisticated commercial relations between different polities.<sup>22</sup> The Ryukyu Kingdom, for instance, maintained tributary relationships with both the Qing and the Tokugawa until its incorporation into the Japanese nation state in 1879. Similarly, the domains of Tsushima and Matsumae used the tribute system as a means of mediating Tokugawa trade relations with Joseon Korea and the Ainu respectively.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, the boundaries between these polities were demarcated not via territorial borders but via vassal relationships, which allowed considerable flexibility for overlap. Pär Cassel points out that in East Asia, as in Europe, “imperial and royal sovereigns usually claimed sovereignty over people rather than over territories.”<sup>24</sup>

21. *Ibid.*, 152-153.

22. Ronald P. Toby, “Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* (1977); Robert Hellyer, “Intra-Asian Trade and the Bakumatsu Crisis: Reconsidering Tokugawa Commercial Policies in Late Edo Period Japan,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005)

23. Robert Hellyer, *A Tale of Two Domains: Satsuma, Tsushima and the System of Foreign Relations in Late Edo Period Japan* (Stanford University, 2001); David Howell, *Capitalism From Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (University of California Press, 1995)

24. Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan (Oxford Studies in International History)* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 3. I take Cassel to mean sovereignty in its broadest sense here rather than in its more precise post-Reformation sense.

The transition to an international regime based on territorial sovereignty occurred in piecemeal fashion starting in the mid-19th century. It was a global process. As Peter Sahlins has shown, the territorial boundaries between continental European states only began to be cleanly demarcated after the Napoleonic Wars, with some borders (such as the one between France and Spain, not being settled until as late as 1866.<sup>25</sup> Lisa Ford has likewise shown how colonial states such as New South Wales and Georgia only began asserting juridical authority over native populations within “their” territory beginning in the 1830s.<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, the territorialization of state space in East Asia and the Pacific did not lag appreciably behind Europe and America. But the process was similarly if not more traumatic. Although territory promised a world cleanly partitioned into chunks of sovereign space, the process of demarcation was inevitably contested and uneven in practice. Some polities, such as the Ryukyu Kingdom or later Korea, were swallowed up completely by their neighbors.<sup>27</sup> Others succeeded in projecting only a qualified territorial sovereignty, initially at least. Japan did not succeed in repealing the treaties granting extraterritoriality to European citizens until as late as 1899; China would not do so until 1943.<sup>28</sup> The Kingdom of Hawaii managed to carve out a precarious formal sovereignty for much of the nineteenth century by playing off the interests of Great Britain, the United States and (latterly) Japan against one

25. Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (University of California Press, 1991), 238-239.

26. Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010)

27. David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (University of California Press, 2005) 8. For a similar process in Southeast Asia, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (University of Hawaii Press, 1997)

28. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan (Oxford Studies in International History)*. Kindle location 3516, 3909.

another. But much as they had done in East Asia, the Great Powers reserved the right for their subjects to be tried under their own jurisdiction even when residing on Hawaiian territory, by the expedient of extending maritime legal codes to cover terrestrial Polynesia as well.<sup>29</sup> The consequences of this proved to be critically destabilizing for Hawaiian domestic politics, eventually paving the way for U.S. Annexation.

Hawaii's relations with Japan reveal another variation on the theme of compromised sovereignty. The Japanese government did not insist on extraterritoriality for its residents in Hawaii, but in 1886 the two states did sign a treaty granting the Japanese Foreign Ministry extensive sway in setting Hawaiian immigration policy.<sup>30</sup> This unusual arrangement highlights another way in which the concept and practice of sovereignty continued to shift during the late nineteenth century. Anxious about an influx of (what they viewed as) alien Oriental labor, Pacific settler states began asserting the right to control migration into their territory.<sup>31</sup> Initially immigration controls were formulated along explicitly racist lines, as in the various Chinese Exclusion Acts promulgated in the United States, Australia and Hawaii.<sup>32</sup> But as Adam McKeown shows, these later gave way to policies couched in the language of liberalism and civilization, not least to avoid giving offense to the governments whose emigrants were being targeted.<sup>33</sup>

29. Lisa Ford, "Law" in Armitage and Bashford, *Pacific Histories*, 223.

30. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*.

31. Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8-9.

32. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Mens Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2008)

33. Adam M. McKeown, *Melanchoy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (Columbia University Press, 2008)

A particularly fraught example of this occurred during the California “immigration crisis” of 1906-1907, when the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt sought to limit Japanese migration to the continental United States not through overtly discriminatory legislation, but by negotiating a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” whereby the Japanese government agreed to curtail emigration of its own accord. These negotiations were complicated by America’s recent annexation of Hawaii, which at the time had a near-majority ethnic Japanese population, and quickly become a conduit for Japanese on-migration to the U.S. Pacific coast. In this respect Hawaii’s borderland status lasted well into the first decade of the nineteenth century, causing the archipelago to become a focal point of white American angst about an encroaching “yellow peril”.

It was in precisely this context that the U.S. government sought to assert its sovereignty over the remote, only intermittently populated islands of the North Pacific. These islands had at one point been claimed by American citizens as territory of the United States, in the hope of developing them as guano mines, coaling stations or even as landing stations for trans-Pacific cable lines. At the turn of the twentieth century however they were, almost without exception, uninhabited by any U.S. citizen. So it was a cause of particular alarm when reports began to reach Honolulu and Washington D.C. that these islands had become the sites of large-scale Japanese bird hunting operations. The American effort to expel Japanese hunters from bird islands, by demarcating them as wildlife reservations, is therefore inseparable from the broader process by which states sought to inscribe and reinscribe territorial sovereignty over the North Pacific.

## **The Trouble with Ecological Imperialism**

By framing the history of albatross exploitation in terms of sovereignty, I hope to signal a clear break from the research that has been done on this topic by environmental historians to date. Central to much of this work has been the concept of “ecological imperialism.” The genesis of this concept can be traced to a 1967 *Science* essay by the historian of technology Lynn White, titled “The Historical Roots of our Environmental Crisis”. White argued that Western civilization was characterized by a uniquely exploitative attitude toward the natural world that was ultimately rooted in Judeo-Christian theology.<sup>34</sup> The implication of White’s argument, although he did not explore it in detail, was that non-Western civilizations historically existed in harmony with Nature without seeking to dominate it. Few scholars today would subscribe to such a nakedly orientalist argument, and yet variations on White’s argument remain influential. Donald Worster provided a refined version of the thesis in his 1977 book *Nature’s Economy*, in which he identified two vying attitudes toward Nature within the Western intellectual tradition: an “imperial” tradition (exemplified by the taxonomist Carolus Linnaeus) that sought to dominate and exploit Nature, and an “arcadian” stance which “advocated a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to peaceful coexistence with other organisms.”<sup>35</sup>

These attempts to identify a particularly imperialist attitude toward Nature within intellectual history have since been supplemented by more materialist critiques. Particularly influential has been Alfred Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism*, which argued compellingly that European colonization of the New World was only made possible with the help of “portman-

34. Lynn White Jr, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155(March 1967)

35. Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) Introduction.

teau biota” (germs, grain, livestock) that accompanied the human settlers and created “Neo-Europes” by eradicating both human and non-human native species.<sup>36</sup> Crosby’s core contention was not that European colonization was ecologically destructive in some absolute way; simply that it was profoundly disruptive, eradicating indigenous biota and replacing them with those imported from the Old World. But he did conclude on a moralistic note, suggesting (in language that echoes White and Worster) that the windfall bounty provided by the era of ecological imperialism has imbued Westerners with foolishly unsustainable expectations of material affluence.<sup>37</sup>

Varying interpretations of Crosby’s theory have proved highly influential, not least among historians of East Asia. Robert Marks and Mark Elvin use the decline of elephant and tiger populations as proxies for the deforestation wrought by Imperial China’s expansion.<sup>38</sup> Ryan Jones has mounted a similar argument, attributing the extinction of Steller’s sea cow to the “imperial movement” of “Russia’s expansion into the North Pacific”.<sup>39</sup> Environmental historians of Japan have been particularly prolific in turning out variations on Crosby’s concept. Brett Walker terms the Tokugawa (1603-1868) conquest of what is now Hokkaidō a form of ecological imperialism, insofar as it was abetted by native inhabitants’ vulnerability

36. Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-900* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) 89.

37. *Ibid.*, 307-308.

38. Robert Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China (Studies in Environment and History)* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (Yale University Press, 2006). Both of these studies, incidentally, stand as rebuttals of White’s thesis that Western civilization has a monopoly on ecological destruction.

39. Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction : Russians and the North Pacific’s Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

to epidemic disease.<sup>40</sup> In his follow-up work set during the Meiji period (1868-1912), he describes how modernizing Japanese succumbed to “the pathology of wolf eradication”, turning Hokkaidō into a “Neo-European landscape” in pursuit of “their imported vision of the nation”<sup>41</sup>. William Tsutsui suggests that Japan’s state-backed whaling industry constitutes a form of “pelagic empire” on account of its “dominion of the world”’s oceans”.<sup>42</sup> And Toshihiro Higuchi invites us to view Japan’s historical reliance on imported fertilizer biomass as a form of “organic imperialism”.<sup>43</sup>

Most relevantly to the current study, the concept of ecological imperialism has become central to much recent scholarship on the Pacific guano economy. John Bellamy Foster’s model of “global metabolic rift” explains the human and environmental damage wrought by the guano trade as a form of ecological imperialism driven by unsustainable agricultural practices in the European metropole.<sup>44</sup> And in his recent monograph, Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge University Press, 2013-03-25), Gregory Cushman suggests a model of “neo-ecological imperialism”, which he distinguishes from Crosby’s one insofar as:

40. Brett L. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* (University of California Press, 2006), 203.

41. Brett L. Walker, *The Lost Wolves of Japan* (University of Washington Press, 2005), Kindle location 2950.

42. William Tsutsui, “The Pelagic Empire: Reconsidering Japanese Expansion” in Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas and Brett Walker, *Japan At Nature’s Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013) 23.

43. Toshihiro Higuchi, “Japan as an Organic Empire: Commercial Fertilizers, Nitrogen Supply, and Japan’s Core-Peripheral Relationship,” in *Environment and Society in the Japanese Islands : From Prehistory to the Present*, ed. Philip Brown and Bruce Batten (University of Oregon Press, 2015).

44. Brett & Bellamy Foster Clark, John, “Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift: Unequal Exchange and the Guano/nitrates Trade,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 50(2009) 316, 330.

Rather than enabling the conquest of new environments and their settlement by invasive organisms and ethnicities, neo-ecological imperialism primarily focused on the maintenance and improvement of environments already inhabited by European-derived peoples.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Hiraoka Akitoshi's invaluable body of work on Japanese exploitation of albatross islands draws a direct connection between practices of unsustainable resource extraction and Japan's imperial expansion into the West Pacific and East Asia.<sup>46</sup>

All these studies have a number of common features. Firstly, they associate imperialism with what they assess to be unsustainable modes of consumption in the metropole. In this respect they represent an almost exact inversion of a once influential model that explained metropolitan underconsumption as the fundamental driver of imperialism. This model - first developed by J.A. Hobson, later propagated in modified form by Lenin - held that the capitalist mode of production suppressed the wages of workers and thereby weakened domestic demand for goods, causing capital to forcibly open up new markets overseas.<sup>47</sup> In recent years this theory has rightly fallen out of favor, being seen as somewhat over-simplistic. Rather, in these newer accounts it is instead metropolitan over-consumption which is the villain. A preoccupation with sustainability has been a defining characteristic of the contemporary environmental movement ever since the publication of the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* in 1972.<sup>48</sup> But sustainability is as difficult to evaluate as resources are to quantify. As Paul Sabin has shown, for the past forty years various economists and ecologists have

45. *Ibid.*, 77.

46. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon no kakudai: Nan'yō no shimajima e no shinshutsu kara shinryaku e* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2012)

47. Hobson, J. A., *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: J. Pott & Co., 1902); Vladimir I Lenin, "Imperialism," *New York: International* (1939)

48. Donella H. Meadows, *The Limits to Growth; a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972)

waged furious, likely irresolvable public debates over the question of whether natural resources are fundamentally finite or unlimited.<sup>49</sup> This reminds us that metrics of sustainability are themselves historically constituted, and that we must be cautious when applying them retrospectively to assess earlier epochs.

Secondly, theories of ecological imperialism frequently connect environmental degradation with the exploitation of human imperial subjects outside the European (or Chinese or Japanese) metropole. While there are clearly many cases where such a connection is easy to draw, the same theories are ill-equipped to explain situations in which indigenous subjects have collaborated with imperialist projects in degrading their environment, or even done so of their own initiative.<sup>50</sup> By the same token, theories of ecological imperialism sit uneasily alongside studies that show imperial or colonial states engaging in comprehensive efforts to manage natural resources. Richard Grove has even suggested that the theory of nature conservation owes a substantive intellectual debt to the synoptic perspective afforded to colonial administrations on islands like Madeira, Mauritius, and St Helena.<sup>51</sup> Certainly, rigorously sustainable management of environmental resources can exist alongside the brutal subjugation of people. One way to escape from the binary of ecologically destructive invaders versus sustainably-living indigenes is to distinguish between imperialism and

49. Paul Sabin, *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble Over Earth's Future* (Yale University Press, 2013) See also Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth; the Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1965)

50. Lynette Russell, *Roving Mariners: Australian Aboriginal Whalers and Sealers in the Southern Oceans, 1790-1870* (*Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building*) (State University of New York Press, 2012-12-01); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008)

51. Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge University Press, 1996)

colonialism as separate processes. In this study I take colonialism to refer to control over land or territory, but imperialism to be a technology of rule specifically over *people*. By this definition Crosby's book, for instance, could easily be retitled *Ecological Colonialism* without its central argument suffering unduly.

Finally, notwithstanding their skepticism toward what Lynn White characterized as a domineering, Baconian attitude toward Nature, theories of ecological imperialism still assert that the natural world is objectively knowable and should be assigned some kind of normative value. To this end, they frequently use the extirpation of a particular apex predator or "star species"<sup>52</sup> of wild animal as a proxy for general biodiversity loss, which in turn serves as a metric to evaluate declining environmental quality. Submerged within these analyses is the hope for a sustainable and therefore *non-imperialist* form of behavior that would take more care to conserve wild animals. Brett Walker puts it vividly when he laments how "the Hokkaido wolf, much like so many other human and nonhuman beings, could be so hastily sacrificed on the bloody alter of modernity."<sup>53</sup>

### **The Political Ecology of Wilderness**

Since the mid-1990s, however, a countervailing approach to environmental history has instead tried to show how different groups of human actors have valued ecosystems in sharply differing ways. This approach draws heavily from the discipline of political ecology, which in turn is indebted to work by Marxist scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, Raymond

52. Robert Marks borrows this term from the biologist and conservationist E.O. Wilson. See Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China (Studies in Environment and History)*, 43-44; Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life* (WW Norton & Company, 1999), 259.

53. Walker, *Lost Wolves of Japan*, Kindle location 2794.

Williams and E.P. Thompson.<sup>54</sup> As such, conflicts are often framed as between elites prioritizing the aesthetic appreciation of “pristine” Nature and indigenous subaltern communities seeking to protect their customary rights of usufruct. Nancy Peluso and Roderick Neumann have shown how colonial states promoted wilderness conservation in Tanzania and Indonesia by establishing national parks at the expense of indigenes who relied on the land for subsistence.<sup>55</sup> Karl Jacoby has uncovered a similar phenomenon in the early national parks of the United States, where conservationists seeking to enact a vision of “nature as pre-human wilderness” found themselves pitted against local hunters, fishers, foragers and swidden cultivators, “people who reacted to this criminalization of their customary activities with hostility.”<sup>56</sup> And Conrad Totman has uncovered how the Meiji Japanese government’s attempt to effectively nationalize large swathes of land for forestry development triggered a wave of popular resistance, often manifested in strategic arson.<sup>57</sup> Louis Warren uncovers the ethnic dimension to many of these class struggles, showing how bird conservationists in the United States - who were overwhelmingly wealthy and white - frequently criminalized

54. Eric Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Free Press, 1960); Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Chatto, 1973); Edward P. Thompson, “Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act,” *London: Allen Lane* (1975). Williams writes how “preservation of wild life as ‘game’ was directly and repeatedly challenged by men living and finding their living in their own places, their own country, but now, by the arbitrariness of law, made over into criminals, into rogues, into marginal men”. Williams, *The Country and the City*, 183.

55. Nancy Lee Peluso, *Rich Forests, Poor People: Resource Control and Resistance in Java* (University of California Press, 1994); Roderick P. Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles Over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 9.

56. Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (University of California Press, 2003-02-03) Kindle location 225, 1903.

57. Conrad Totman, *Japan’s Imperial Forest: Goryōrin, 1889-1946: With a Supporting Study of the Kan/Min Division of Woodland in Early Meiji Japan, 1871-76* (University of Hawaii Press, 2007)

American Indians, Hispanics and Italian immigrants for engaging in their customary hunting behavior.<sup>58</sup>

A common thread running through many of these studies is that the notion of a pristine natural environment uninhabited by people is itself a social construct. This critique has been put most forcefully by William Cronon in his essay “The Trouble with Wilderness”, itself developed substantially from the insights of Raymond Williams.<sup>59</sup> “There is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness,” Cronon argues:

nostalgia for a vanishing wilderness is often nothing less than the inversion of the old idea, deeply ingrained in nineteenth century American nationalism, that the frontier of the United States and the civilization it embodied was predestined to expand ever westward across the North American continent, which consisted simply of an empty expanse waiting to be colonized.<sup>60</sup>

In practice, wilderness conservation has frequently involved the ejection of American Indians and other inhabitants so that “tourists could safely enjoy the illusion that they were seeing their nation in its pristine, original state.”<sup>61</sup> But for Cronon, the central paradox of wilderness as a concept is that it reproduces a Judeo-Christian duality between the human and non-human worlds: “The place where we are is the place where nature is not... [Therefore] by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us.”<sup>62</sup>

58. Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (Yale University Press, 1994)

59. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1985): “Nature”.

60. William Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* WW Norton & Company, 1996) Kindle location 1224.

61. *Ibid.*, Kindle location 1203; 1224.

62. *Ibid.*, Kindle location 1257.

## Science, Nature and Magic

This study seeks to develop Cronon's argument in two ways. Firstly, it pays attention to the role played by nature conservation in reproducing state authority over territory. It has been well established by Neumann, Warren, Jacoby *et al* that conservationists have often succeeded in co-opting the state in support of their goals - establishing national parks, enforcing hunting bans on endangered species and so on - often against the interests of non-elite sections of society. But less explored is the extent to which states have deployed technologies of environmental protection as a means of buttressing their own sovereign power. The majority of case studies on the history of wildlife conservation have been conducted at the national and sub-national level, and those few studies that have focussed on border regions have tended to take the fixity of those borders for granted. As a result, although important studies have been conducted on the ways in which borders have influenced nature conservation, little has been done to examine the reverse process.<sup>63</sup> This study, however, will focus on wildlife conservation efforts that occurred in places where states' sovereign authority was still uncertain.

The second way in which Cronon's insight will be developed is by analyzing the role of scientists in producing both wilderness discourse and demarcated wilderness space. Following Bruno Latour's injunction that "the enigma of scientific production must be repositioned at the very core of political ecology," detailed attention shall be paid to the manner in which American and Japanese ornithologists came to produce concepts of both wilderness and its close relative, biodiversity.<sup>64</sup> The degree to which scientific practitioners

63 See for example Lissa K. Wadewitz, *The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea* (University of Washington Press, 2012)

64. Latour, *The Politics of Nature*, Kindle location 81.

such as Aldo Leopold or William Vogt availed themselves, in their public utterances, of the unabashedly Romantic rhetoric of the wilderness cult is already well established.<sup>65</sup> But what is perhaps less obvious is the role played by orthodox taxonomic enquiry in helping to gloss certain ecosystems or places as rich in wilderness. “Defenders of biodiversity,” writes

Cronon:

often point to ‘untouched’ ecosystems as the best and richest repositories of the undiscovered species we must certainly try to protect. Although at first blush an apparently more ‘scientific’ concept than wilderness, biological diversity in fact invokes many of the same sacred values.<sup>66</sup>

Though the term “biodiversity” was coined only in the 1980s, this study will show that the underlying concept has been co-constitutive with wilderness since at least the turn of the twentieth century.

Ornithologists’ scientific research and conservationist political activism have been similarly inter-mingled. First in the United States and, later, in postwar Japan, they collaborated with states both in order to survey the biodiversity of North Pacific bird islands, and at the same time to protect the very same biodiversity that they themselves had disclosed. As bird protection in practice usually entailed attempts to evict from the islands what they took to be human and non-human interlopers, ornithologists contributed to the production not just of discourse about wilderness, but also of physically demarcated wilderness space in the form of national parks and wildlife reserves.

65 Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, 1982); Miles A. Powell, “‘Pestered With Inhabitants’: Aldo Leopold, William Vogt, and More Trouble With Wilderness,” *Pacific Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (2015)

66. Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness,” Kindle location 1279.

This collaboration between scientists and states to produce sovereign wilderness space was a form of magic. This is perhaps a peculiar word to deploy when describing the activities of twentieth century scientists. To be sure, the magicians themselves would almost certainly not have described their behavior as such. Far from it probably. For permission to use the term we must instead turn to the anthropologists, who have for nearly a century now been laboring to rescue the concept from its banishment to the depths of primitive superstition.

The pioneer in this effort was Bronisław Malinowski, who famously argued that magic is deployed as a compensatory mechanism whenever primitive man “has to recognize the impotence of his knowledge and his rational technique.”<sup>67</sup> Malinowski was at pains to point out that magical operations continued to be performed not just by the primitive Trobriand Islanders that were his main object of study, but also in the West, for example in the modern advertising industry.<sup>68</sup> The historian Keith Thomas applied Malinowski’s theory to early modern Europe, showing that the suppression of magic during the Reformation owed more to the imposition of theological orthodoxy than to scientific progress as such. Natural philosophers from Bacon through to Newton and Locke intermingled an interest in magic with what has in retrospect been deemed to be their legitimately scientific work. Rather, it was theologians and churchmen who sought to stigmatize magic: not by distinguishing it from science (which did not exist yet), but by distinguishing illegitimate magical manipulation from legitimate intercessory religious prayer.<sup>69</sup> The suppression of magic in Europe

67. Bronisław Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion, and Other Essays* (Waveland Press, 1948) cited in Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science and Religion and the Scope of Rationality (Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures)* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 72.

68. Malinowski cited in *Ibid.*, 80.

69. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Penguin Global, 2012)

therefore occurred at least a century prior to the moment when advances in medicine might have rendered it obsolete.<sup>70</sup> Channelling Malinowski, Thomas suggested that “[i]f magic is to be defined as the employment of ineffective techniques to allay anxiety when effective ones are not available, then we must recognize that no society will ever be free from it.”<sup>71</sup>

If Thomas, like Malinowski, worked to rescue primitive thought from the enormous condescension of modernity, he still viewed magic as an essentially ineffective substitute for true “scientific” technology. More recently, however, Stanley Tambiah has sought to refine Malinowski’s insight so as to rehabilitate magic’s efficacy even further, chipping away at the conceptual barriers separating science, religion and magic in the process. Tambiah disagrees with Malinowski’s claim that “magic ends where technology begins” - for if that were the case then “if man developed adequate technical procedures for dealing with a task, then any previous ‘magical’ ritual connected with that task ought automatically to disappear”.<sup>72</sup> But he emphasizes that Malinowski was essentially right about the *sociological* function of magic: “He saw how the ritual expert and specialist, by conducting imperative ceremonies, actually thereby mobilized manpower and resources and that the rite served as triggering mechanisms for the sustained conduct of practical operations.”<sup>73</sup>

For Tambiah, then, magic can be thought of as being:

psychologically true in that it was “reasonable” in terms of addressing certain psychological needs of the individual, and it was sociologically true because its practice raised the optimism and hopes of human beings, who heard and saw it performed, and because it had multiple positive social consequences. A magician’s spells may not objectively, causally and directly affect the processes of nature (the garden soil and

70. *Ibid.*, 415, 422, 648, 770.

71. *Ibid.*, 774, 800.

72. Tambiah, *Magic, Science and Religion*, 72-73.

73. *Ibid.*, 73.

the plants growing on it could not respond to the magical words and acts), but these words and acts did influence the human witnesses and through them produced consequences by affecting their intentions and motivations and their expectations.<sup>74</sup>

By this point, the parallels with wildlife protection hopefully begin to emerge. Whatever nature conservation's technological efficacy (which, as we shall see, is notoriously hard to assess), it is largely irrelevant to its sociological effect - which is to demarcate certain species and the environments they inhabit as sacred, and so under the protection of the state and their scientific allies. Nature conservation has, since the beginning of the twentieth century, operated as a form of magic, in which states and scientists collaborate to assert sovereignty over territory by rendering it uninhabited.

Islands make for excellent locations in which to examine such a phenomenon. In one of the earliest and most penetrating analyses of sovereignty as praxis, Prospero uses sorcery to control Nature, and in doing so demonstrates to natives and interlopers alike his mastery over his island cell. To this day, states enlist the aid of naturalists to conduct what political scientists call "sovereignty games" that signal their authority over disputed territory.<sup>75</sup>

Recently, for instance, Japanese local government officials embarked on a campaign to have UNESCO include the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and their albatrosses within the (Japanese) Amami and Ryukyu World Natural Heritage Site.<sup>76</sup> Leaked U.S. State Department cables reveal how the British government established a marine park around its Indian Ocean

74. *Ibid.*, 81

75. Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, *Sovereignty Games: Instrumentalizing State Sovereignty in Europe and Beyond* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 7-9; Reinhard Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands - Between "Shelving" and "Dispute Escalation," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 12:30, no. 3 (28 July 2014)

76. "'Senkaku' mo sekai isan tōroku o: Ishigaki-shi, kuni ni genchi chōsa yōkyū e" *Sankei Shimbun*, 4 February 2013.

Territory islands (one of which, Diego Garcia, hosts a notorious U.S. military base).<sup>77</sup> A British diplomat reassured the State Department that “the British Indian Ocean Territory’s former inhabitants would find it difficult, if not impossible, to pursue their claim for resettlement on the islands if the entire Chagos Archipelago were a marine reserve.”<sup>78</sup> And various states continue to assert sovereignty over territorial slices of Antarctica - home to Coleridge’s “tutelary spirit”, and the majority of known albatross species - by pledging to jointly administer the continent as a “natural reserve, devoted to peace and science”.<sup>79</sup>

Shakespeare might recognize these sovereignty games as spells.

77. During the War on Terror, Diego Garcia was one of the military bases used to conduct extraordinary rendition procedures on battlefield detainees. Peter Sand, “The Chagos Archipelago: Footprint of Empire, or World Heritage?,” *Environmental Policy and Law* 40, no. 5 (2010)

78. Wikileaks cable 09LONDON1156: [“HMG Floats Proposal for Marine Reserve”](#) (15 May 2009)

79 Antarctic Treaty System 6, Madrid Protocol: Article 2 (1991)

## Chapter Outline

The dissertation is structured in a loosely chronological order, with each chapter broadly focussed on a different set of overlapping, often conflicting uses of albatrosses.

[Chapter One](#) begins with a discussion of a 1902 diplomatic dispute known as the Marcus Island Incident. It traces the origins of the dispute to the sudden rise in global demand for guano and plumage, two commodities derived from the albatrosses that nested on North Pacific islands. These commodity booms triggered a colonial rush for territory, as entrepreneurs in the U.S. and Japan petitioned their respective governments to assert sovereignty over bird islands they had staked claims to. State and non-state actors negotiated these claims within a context of ambiguous and often ineffective international law. Disputes were frequently resolved in favor of whoever managed to successfully inhabit the territory in question, and this created anxiety among statesmen and wildlife conservationists alike.

[Chapter Two](#) analyses the relationship between the material production of guano fertilizer, and the discursive production of pristine wilderness space. It begins by tracing the history of European knowledge about albatrosses, from the earliest voyages into southern latitudes until the first sustained studies of the birds, conducted on the North Pacific island of Laysan in the 1890s. It then shifts to examine the development of Hawaii's plantation economy in the late nineteenth century, which made such ornithological studies possible by transforming Laysan from an uninhabited, inaccessible island into an operational guano mine. The chapter concludes by showing how ornithologists occluded from their representations of Laysan all mention of the island's sizeable population of Japanese indentured laborers, thus rendering it a pristine, because unpeopled, State of Nature.

[Chapter Three](#) continues where Chapter Two left off, analyzing American attempts to evict Japanese bird hunters from Laysan and other sparsely populated Northwest Hawaiian Islands in the decade following U.S. Annexation. Japanese bird “depredations” fed into white anxiety about Asian trans-Pacific migration; the campaign against Japanese “poachers” was waged against the backdrop of a broad effort to exclude Japanese from the Territory of Hawaii through diplomatic, legislative and economic means. The campaign culminated in the establishment of the Hawaiian Islands Reservation, and a court battle to prevent Laysan Island from being leased out to Japanese plumage hunters. Wildlife conservation thus formed a part of the U.S. government’s effort to transform its new Pacific colony from a borderland space into a bordered one.

[Chapter Four](#) returns to the topic of guano mining. It traces the uneven growth of Japan’s phosphate mining industry over the first half of the twentieth century, focussing on the figure of Tsunetō Noritaka, a soil scientist turned entrepreneur who developed uninhabited bird islands as guano mines. The chapter critiques the various models of ecological imperialism that explain imperial expansionism as driven by unsustainable patterns of resource consumption. Instead, it shows how self-interested actors deployed the discourse of sustainability so as to co-opt the Japanese state into promoting protectionist economic policies.

[Chapter Five](#) examines reasons for the transformation in Japanese attitudes toward albatrosses during the postwar period. It pays attention not only to the usual class politics of wildlife conservation, but also to the postcolonial context unique to Japan after 1945. Inspired by their interactions with SCAP officials during the American Occupation, Japanese ornithologists seized on bird protection as a means to demonstrate their country’s suitability

for reintegration into a U.S.-led international community. At the same time, nature conservation became a convenient way for the Japanese state to redevelop the Izu Islands, a remote island chain that had been economically devastated by war and the loss of empire.

The [Epilogue](#) brings the story up to the present day, showing how Japanese ornithologists and local government officials continue to mobilize wildlife conservation as a means of asserting territorial sovereignty over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

# 1. Producing Sovereignty

## The Great Japanese Bird Massacre, 1887-1902

*The Marcus Island Incident*

*Sovereignty, Territory and Inhabitation*

*The Guano Rush*

*Bonins of Contention*

*Bird Rush Part I: Tamaoki Han'emon Claims Torishima*

*Bird Rush Part II: Mizutani Shinroku Claims Marcus Island*

*Producing Sovereignty*

*Destiny Manifest?*

In the summer of 1902, in the middle of the North Pacific Ocean, a crew of American guano surveyors engaged in an armed standoff with the Japanese Navy. The dispute garnered extensive column inches in newspapers on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, and became known as the Marcus Island Incident.<sup>80</sup> At stake was sovereignty over a remote speck of rock located three days sail from Yokohama and nearly three weeks from Honolulu, the significance of which stemmed entirely from its colony of large seabirds known in English as albatrosses and in Japanese as *ahōdori*. The American party valued Marcus for its guano

80. “Want Cable at Marcus Island” *The Hawaiian Star*, 10 July 1902; “Rondon tokuden—Beikoku no kojima senryō keikaku” *Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, 16 July 1902; “Ocean Speck is the Prize” *The San Francisco Call*, 29 July 1902.

deposits: calcified bird excrement which could be mined and sold as fertilizer in Hawaii, the continental United States, or as far afield as Europe. The Japanese, however, were more directly interested in the birds themselves. William Alanson Bryan, an ornithologist accompanying the American expedition, described Japanese treatment of the albatrosses there in tones of unvarnished moral outrage:

The story of the Marcus Island colony of goonies<sup>81</sup> is one of death and extermination. In the beginning of the operations of the Japanese company on the island goonies were fairly abundant. Not being able to find guano by their crude methods, they developed a scheme whereby they were able to make a marketable commodity by killing the birds and boiling them down in great kettles. The resultant, consisting of the flesh, bones and viscera, was barreled and shipped to Japan where it was used as a fertilizer. The long wing feathers of all the birds were pulled out and carefully preserved to be shipped to America and Europe and sold as “eagle feathers”, which were in great demand for trimming on ladies’ hats. The feathers from the breast were plucked off and sold by the pound. A profitable business was thus developed, with the deplorable result that within six years the entire colony of these splendid birds has been exterminated.<sup>82</sup>

As this account suggests, three different ways of valuing albatrosses collided on Marcus in 1902: for their feathers, for their excrement, and as “splendid birds” that were worthy of protection in themselves.

The story to come shall revolve around these three different usages of albatrosses, and William Alanson Bryan plays a starring role. We shall begin, however, by exploring the origins of the Marcus Island Incident itself. Within the grand trajectory of US-Japan relations, the dispute was of decided triviality. Walter Lafeber, in his magisterial account of diplomacy

81. A common synonym for albatross, favored by sailors.

82. William Alanson Bryan, “A Monograph of Marcus Island: An Account of Its Physical Features and Geology, With Descriptions of the Fauna and Flora,” *Occasional Papers of the Bernice Pauhi Bishop Museum* II, no. 1 (1904), 106.

between the two countries since 1853, wisely passes over it without mention.<sup>83</sup> But however inconsequential as a milestone on the road to Pearl Harbor, the Marcus Island Incident nevertheless serves as a case study that helps us examine a quite different question. On the cusp of the twentieth century, how did people and states assert sovereignty over unpopulated territory such as the islands of the North Pacific? What does this in turn say about the relationship between inhabitability, commodity production, and sovereignty production - then and now?

### **The Marcus Island Incident**

The furore over Marcus was triggered when Andrew Rosehill, captain of the *Julia E. Whalen* and recently invested stockholder in the Marcus Guano Island Co., informed *The Hawaiian Star* of his intention to sail to the island “armed with credentials from the States Department of the United States, which show that he has been granted title to the land by America.”<sup>84</sup>

Rosehill, a U.S. citizen resident in Honolulu, had first visited Marcus in 1889. Accounts vary as to how exactly he staked his claim to the island: according to one report, he tried to convince one of his crew to camp there until his return, but none were willing to do so.

Instead he put a note inside a bottle, which he tied to a tree on the island.<sup>85</sup> Another version tells that Rosehill did indeed convince a crew-member and his wife to decamp on the island.

83. Walter Lafeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (W W Norton & Co Inc, 1997)

84. “Want Cable at Marcus Island.” Rosehill also claimed to have letters from Saitō Miki, the Japanese consul in Hawaii, “notifying the Japanese squatters who are thought to be on the island, that Captain Rosehill has the right to the place.” Later the Japanese consul would deny that the letter he gave to Rosehill said any such thing.

85. “Japanese Sorry For Rosehill” *Evening Bulletin*, 17 September 1902. According to the *Bulletin*, Rosehill did visit Marcus again in 1896, but was unable to make landfall on the island due to the rough seas at the time.

But after eleven months the couple grew weary of life there, and decided to board a passing vessel bound for Honolulu.<sup>86</sup> Rosehill himself did not set foot on Marcus again for the next thirteen years.

Around the turn of the century, reports began to reach Honolulu that Japanese were inhabiting the island. In January 1901 a steamship belonging to the California & Oriental Co. observed forty-five Japanese, including women and children, ashore on Marcus. Arriving at night, the boat's crew spotted a large bonfire and assumed that shipwreck survivors must have washed ashore. The captain sent up a distress flare. But the next morning they realized that the Japanese were busily engaged in catching fish and birds, and in fact did not want to be rescued.<sup>87</sup> Later that same year the captain of a U.S. troop transport landed on the island with a detachment of soldiers. According to *The Hawaiian Star*:

The party was met by about twenty Japanese, some of whom were armed with guns. The Japanese were at first disposed to make a hostile demonstration and in fact, went so far as to order Captain Pierce off the island. He told them he was from an American vessel and added that it made no difference whether they wanted him to land or not, for he had about 1,500 soldiers back on the vessel to back him.<sup>88</sup>

Captain Pierce succeeded in landing on the island, and on making a quick inspection he noticed large numbers of houses built on the island, plus a number of wells that had been bored in search of drinking water. News that Japanese were living on Marcus seems to have roused Captain Rosehill to action, and on 10 July 1902, shortly after being invested as a shareholder in the Marcus Island Guano Co., he announced his intention to return to the

86. JFM 1.4.1.12 Kokka oyobi ryōiki ni kan suru zakken: "Marcus Island - The United States' Claims"

87. JFM 1.4.1.7 Teikoku hanto kankei zakken: Postal Minister to Foreign Ministry Postal Dept., 29 January 1901

88. "Jap Squatters May Show Fight: Marcus Island believed to be in possession of little brown men" *The Hawaiian Star*, 3 July 1902.

island along with a geologist who would determine whether its phosphate deposits had commercial value.

The Japanese ambassador to Washington DC read the news of the *Whalen*'s departure with alarm. He immediately telegraphed the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, pointing out that Marcus Island was already Japanese sovereign territory, and advising the dispatch of a man-of-war to protect Japanese interests there.<sup>89</sup> While the Foreign Ministry considered how to respond, the Japanese press got hold of the story. On 16 July a headline in the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* warned of "U.S. plans to occupy our isolated island".<sup>90</sup> The *Yomiuri Shimbun* followed up the next day, likewise warning that an American expeditionary force<sup>91</sup> was bearing down on Marcus.<sup>92</sup> On 23 July the Japanese Foreign Ministry despatched a diplomatic note to the Department of State in Washington DC, asserting that Rosehill's claim over Marcus Island was invalid: the island was already the sovereign territory of the Empire of Japan and had been since its incorporation into Tokyo Prefecture under the name of Minami Torishima four years previously. That same day, the fast cruiser *Kasagi* departed for Marcus with a Foreign Ministry diplomat onboard, so as to impress upon Rosehill the reality of Japanese jurisdiction over the island.

Immediately on hearing news of the *Kasagi*'s departure, the Marcus Island Guano Co.'s backers revealed to the Hawaiian press what they had previously seen fit to conceal: anticipating resistance from Japanese "squatters" on the island, they had loaded the *Julia E.*

89. JFM 1.4.1.7 Teikoku hanto kankei zakken: Takahira to Tokyo, 13 July 1902. These events transpired a year before the completion of the trans-Pacific cable: at the time all telecommunications traffic between Hawaii and Japan had to be transmitted via London. For more detail on the strategic significance of the trans-Pacific cable linking San Francisco with Manila, see [Chapter Three](#).

90. "Minami Torishima to Beikoku seifu" *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, 27 July 1902.

91. Japanese: *enseitai* 遠征隊.

92. "Beikoku kojima senryō keikaku ni tsuite" *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 17 July 1902.

*Whalen* with Mauser repeating rifles.<sup>93</sup> The stage was set for conflict, and with both ships ocean-bound (and thus cut-off from all means of communication), the media were left to speculate.<sup>94</sup> Which ship would reach Marcus first? If the *Whalen* arrived first, would they evict the Japanese forcefully? If the *Kasagi* succeeded in repelling the *Whalen* on its arrival (as seemed likely given the large disparity in firepower), would the United States respond in turn by sending its own warship?

This latter eventuality is almost certainly what the backers of the Marcus Island Guano Co. hoped for. Their media allies pointed out that, in 1859, President Buchanan's administration had dispatched a U.S. frigate to support an American citizen's claim to a guano island off the coast of Haiti.<sup>95</sup> Recent history also suggested a vigorous American response might be forthcoming. In 1898, a perceived attack on an American ship off the coast of Cuba had become the *casus belli* that sparked the Spanish-American War and indirectly triggered Hawaiian Annexation. To those who felt that war over a speck of rock in the ocean might be an overreaction, *The Hawaiian Gazette* was at pains to point out that American strategic interests were at stake. If the United States failed to defend its sovereignty over Marcus, "there are hundreds of unoccupied islands in the Aleutian group which have never been occupied by men and [the U.S.] could lose the title to these by Japanese settlement and claim for any Japanese who should choose to occupy them."<sup>96</sup> In short, failing to uphold

93. "Where Were the Mausers?" *The Hawaiian Star*, 31 July 1902; "Mausers for Men on Marcus: Secret Orders for Captain of Whalen" *The Hawaiian Gazette*, 1 August 1902.

94. "Rondon tokuden.;" JFM 1.4.1.12 Kokka oyobi ryōiki ni kan suru zakken: "Is Our Flag Over Marcus Island?"

95. Kokusai Kōhō Kenkyūshitsu, *Minami Torishima jiken: Hōka Daigaku kokusai kōhō enshū hōkoku* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku Kōnai Kokusai Kōhō Kenkyūshitsu, 1902), 12 For a detailed account of the dispute over the island of Navassa, see Christina Duffy Burnett, "The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (Sep 2005), 788-794.

96. Kokusai Kōhō Kenkyūshitsu, *Minami Torishima jiken*. 10. At the time, even the Alaskan

Rosehill's claim could result in the erosion of U.S. sovereignty across the Pacific more widely.

### **Sovereignty, Territory and Inhabitation**

Clearly then, at stake in the Marcus Island Incident was the overriding issue of sovereignty. But what is this quasi-mystical, “notoriously slippery”<sup>97</sup> concept that lies at the heart of the modern international system? The origin of sovereignty is conventionally traced to the Reformation, when various princes and kings began to challenge the spiritual authority of the Papacy by asserting the right to decide the religious confession of their subjects.<sup>98</sup> Significantly, this new independence, formalized in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia,<sup>99</sup> initially applied to the governance of *human* populations, and continued pre-Reformation conceptions of political authority as primarily constituted through interpersonal relations. But as Stuart Elden argues, drawing on Foucault, the seventeenth century also saw the emergence of a new political technology, which defined state sovereignty not just in terms of human subject

mainland was sparsely populated by U.S. citizens. A recent census had recorded Alaska as having a total “native white” population of 21,799 people. See United States Census Office, *Twelfth Population Census of the United States - 1900*, 482: Table 9. - “Population by Sex, General Nativity, and Color”.

97. H. Kalmo and Q. Skinner “Introduction: a concept in fragments” in Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner, *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present and Future of a Contested Concept* (Cambridge University Press, 2014-03-06), 2.

98. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States: Ad 990 - 1992* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992)

99. It is increasingly argued that the Westphalian moment did not fully crystalize in Europe until much later, perhaps even as late as the 19th century. See Stephen D. Krasner, “Westphalia and All That,” in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 235– 36; Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001)

populations but also according to territorially delimited space.<sup>100</sup> The implications for the theorization of sovereignty were profound: the shift from “Charlemagne, King of the Franks” to “Louis, King of France”, created the conceptual world that allowed Weber to define the state as “that human community which, *within a certain area or territory*... has a (successful) monopoly of legitimate physical violence. [emphasis added]”<sup>101</sup> This territorial dimension of modern sovereignty gives rise to situations that would have been inconceivable before the seventeenth century, in which one or more governments can assert that uninhabited islands, or even stretches of ocean, constitute inherent sovereign territory.

Until recently it was assumed that the Westphalia system was exported to the rest of the world essentially unchanged - via colonization, gunboat diplomacy, and other mechanisms of informal imperialism.<sup>102</sup> Famously, even countries like Japan, which were never formally colonized, felt impelled to adopt Western juridical norms in order to revise the Unequal Treaties that had been imposed on them.<sup>103</sup> A new generation of scholars, however, has begun to paint a more nuanced picture of how modern sovereignty has been constructed. Antony Anghie argues that European imperialism and colonialism not only facilitated the spread of sovereignty as a concept, but also shaped it in the process: “at a time when when sovereignty was generally accepted as fixed, stable and monolithic, colonial jurists self-consciously grasped the usefulness of keeping sovereignty undefined in order that it be

100. Elden credits Leibniz in particular with the innovation. See Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, 315-320.

101. *Ibid.*, 327-329.

102. Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change (Princeton Studies in International History and Politics)* (Princeton University Press, 1996-07-22); Robert Jackson, “Sovereignty: The Evolution of an Idea (Polity Key Concepts in the Social Sciences Series),” (2013), 54-55.

103. Douglas R. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2001), Ch.5.

extended or withdrawn according to British interests.”<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Alexis Dudden shows how Japanese diplomats exploited prevailing nineteenth century notions of the civilizing mission in order to secure international legal assent for the colonization of Korea. In the late nineteenth century, colonialism became constitutive of sovereignty, so that Japan’s own status as a sovereign nation was buttressed by its successful abrogation of the sovereignty of a weaker (and therefore less civilized) one.<sup>105</sup>

The terrain itself could also shape sovereignty regimes. Lauren Benton explores the interaction between juridical and geographic discourse about seaways, islands and highlands, showing that imperial expansion did not so much manage to “flatten space and corral law into conventionally defined jurisdictions” as create “repeating sets of irregularly shaped corridors with ambiguous and shifting relations to imperial sovereignty”.<sup>106</sup> Following Benton, I argue that, right through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, states struggled to impose a European-derived model of territorial sovereignty on far-flung corners of the globe. In the North Pacific we see instead how colonial projects, driven by fluctuating commercial incentives, were frequently compromised by the inability of state and non-state actors to inscribe sovereignty on unpopulated terrain.

At this point, it is worth making a distinction: here I am talking about colonialism, but *not* about imperialism. As I see it, the term colonialism applies because sovereignty over places such as Marcus Island was not asserted based on any claim to autochthony, but rather

104. Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law) (Cambridge University Press, 2007-05-28), 89.

105. Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

106. Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), xii.

on the stated intention and ability to settle and develop the territory in question. But the label of imperialism seems inappropriate for two reasons. The first is a technical one, in that such territories were generally incorporated directly into the metropolitan territory of the colonizing state, rather than accorded subordinate legal status within an explicitly imperial polity. The second is a more philosophical objection. Whereas colonialism generally refers to control over territory, I take imperialism to be a technology of rule specifically over *people*. The latter is thus unhelpful when discussing territory uninhabited by humans. In discussing the Marcus Island Incident, for example, it is not immediately obvious whether it is the Americans or the Japanese (or perhaps both) who should be deemed the imperialists. I shall return to this point later.

This is not to deny that there was a significant overlap between colonialist and imperialist projects during this period. Japan's annexation of Korea, for example, may be properly called both colonialist and imperialist, as it involved both formal colonization of the territory controlled by the Joseon Dynasty and the subjugation of its inhabitants within an imperial relationship to the Japanese metropole. Imperialists often deployed explicitly colonialist discourse in order to justify their seizure of land or resources from the indigenous inhabitants. Richard Drayton, in his study of the British Empire, shows how efficacious exploitation of resources served to bolster imperial sovereignty:

The work of agricultural improvement, guided by science and revealed by religion, was a task so sacred that it justified violence and coercion...The idea of scientific agriculture had sustained what we might call a myth of the Profligate Native: that whoever was on the spot was wasting its resources and that therefore they might legitimately be expelled, or submitted to European tutelage.<sup>107</sup>

107. Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (Yale University Press, 2000), 55, 232-233.

But the sword of utilitarianism cut both ways: colonial sovereignty was difficult to defend when the territory in question had not even been settled, let alone developed in any way. And yet in the North Pacific, during the speculative scramble to claim bird islands, this is exactly what states were trying to do.

### **The Guano Rush**

The scramble to assert sovereignty over the islands of North Pacific did not occur because they were newly discovered. Ships had been plying the North Pacific sea routes on a regular basis ever since the Hudson Bay Company started shipping furs from the Pacific Northwest to Canton via Hawaii. As a result, the islands were well-known to navigators by the mid-19th century. Marcus Island was sighted by a Spanish galleon crossing from Mexico to Manila in 1694; it was sighted again in 1864, 1874 and 1879.<sup>108</sup> From the early nineteenth century, New England whalers regularly stopped at Laysan Island to secure fresh water and meat, without claiming it as sovereign territory of any particular state.<sup>109</sup> As early as 1543, the Spanish navigator Bernardo de la Torre sighted the island now known as Oki no Daitōjima during an abortive Pacific crossing. He noted only that it was a poor prospect for a harbor, and named it “Rasa”, meaning blank or empty.<sup>110</sup> In the latter half of the-19th century, however, shifts in global commodity markets suddenly transformed the manner in which Japanese and Ameri-

108. Bernhard Welsch, “Was Marcus Island Discovered By Bernardo De La Torre in 1543?,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 39, no. 1 (2004/06/01) As the title suggests, Welsch argues for an even earlier sighting of Marcus.

109. Jeremiah N. Reynolds, *Address on the subject of a surveying and exploring expedition to the Pacific Ocean and South Seas: Delivered in the Hall of Representatives on the evening of April 3, 1836* (New York:1836), 201, 223.

110. *Ibid.*

can entrepreneurs perceived these hitherto valueless islands. The first of these shifts was known as the Guano Rush.

The use of guano as fertilizer has a very long history indeed. The term derives from the Quechua word “*huanu*” meaning dung, and accounts from European travelers along the Pacific coast of South America mention active guano mines from as early as the seventeenth century.<sup>111</sup> The trade seems to have been decidedly local in scale however.<sup>112</sup> In 1806 Alexander von Humboldt drew the attention of his readers to the presence of significant phosphate-rich deposits along the Peruvian coast, but it was not until the 1840s, when merchants discovered that these deposits could be exported for sale in Europe and the eastern United States, that the trade took on global proportions.<sup>113</sup> The first shipment of guano to Europe occurred in 1838, when two Peruvian businessmen contracted with an British merchant to forward to commercial samples to Liverpool. The shipment was so profitable (fetching eighteen pounds per ton dockside, at a cost of six pounds per ton) that two years later a consortium was formed to export at scale. That same year the Peruvian government realized the enormous potential value of its guano reserves and nationalized them outright.<sup>114</sup> Peru’s neighboring states soon did likewise, and the rush to capitalize on this newly valuable

111. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, 3.

112. George Hutchinson, “The Biogeochemistry of Vertebrate Excretion,” *Bulletin of American Natural History* 96(1950), 3, 43 Hutchinson writes that around fifty boats were in operation transporting guano from the Chincha Islands to the town of Chancay in Peru, where it was sold as fertilizer. He estimates that something in the order of 1,700 to 10,000 tons of guano may have been produced per year, a rate of extraction that would not have exhausted total extant deposits for at least another 800 years, and perhaps much longer. By way of comparison, guano exports to Britain would reach 199,732 tons in 1850. Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Great Guano Rush: Entrepreneurs and American Overseas Expansion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 9-10.

113. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World.*, 25-26.

114. Skaggs, *The Great Guano Rush: Entrepreneurs and American Overseas Expansion*, 5-6.

resource triggered an inter-state contest for control of the guano islands, eventually leading to the Chincha Islands War (1864-66) fought between Spain and the Quadruple Alliance of Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia.<sup>115</sup>

The astonishing profits yielded from the South American guano trade also spurred others to go in search of hitherto undiscovered guano deposits to exploit. American and British merchants in particular scoured the oceans in search of guano islands to claim, and looked to their own governments to support them. Captain Rosehill would be among the last of these, but he would not be the first to give the State Department a headache. A diplomatic scandal over the Lobos Islands, off the coast of Peru, forced Secretary of State Daniel Webster from office in 1852 - and may even have brought about his premature death.<sup>116</sup> In 1856, after the United States became embroiled in a three-way dispute with the British and Venezuelan governments over the Caribbean island of Aves, Congress began to mull the potential implications of the guano rush for American foreign policy. When combined with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, it meant that the United States would potentially become liable to defend, in perpetuity, sovereignty over a collection of remote islets whose only conceivable value lay in the finite amount of guano that could be mined from them.

In an attempt to forestall this eventuality, Senator Seward (who, as Secretary of State, would later negotiate the purchase of Alaska) proposed a piece of legislation that became known as the Guano Acts. As he explained:

If there was any such thing as a prospect of dominion to be secured to the United States resulting from the discovery and occupation of these islands, it would be a subject for some jealousy, but the bill is framed in

115. Clark, "Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift.", 324-328.

116. Skaggs, *The Great Guano Rush: Entrepreneurs and American Overseas Expansion.*, 22-26.

such a way as to embrace only these more ragged rocks, which are covered with this deposit in the ocean, which are fit for no dominion, or for anything else, except for the guano which is found on them...when- ever the Guano should be exhausted, or cease to be found on the islands, they should revert and relapse out of the jurisdiction of the United States.<sup>117</sup>

As Christina Duffy Burnett argues, the Guano Islands Act was constitutionally innovative in that it was an attempt to protect the United States' commercial interests while temporally curbing its sovereign obligations. As soon as guano "should be exhausted, or cease to be found on the islands", American sovereignty over them would expire. However the legisla- tion was dogged by a lack of clarity. Namely, it did not stipulate how to determine that guano deposits on a given island were exhausted. The cessation of mining activity was not necessar- ily a guide, for guano mining operations tended to commence, halt and resume depending upon a number of factors - including projected market price, operating cost and labor cost. (As we shall see in [Chapter Two](#), guano mine labor was increasingly sourced from East Asia as the century wore on, generally via indenture.) Guano exhaustion was only one possible reason for the closure of a mine. Furthermore, as the wording suggests, there was uncertainty as to whether guano constituted a renewable resource - it being unclear at what rate fresh reserves was deposited and calcified. (This uncertainty continued throughout the period under study, though for the mining industry the question was moot; guano was simply mined at whatever rate was most profitable.) The Guano Islands Act has long been consigned to constitutional obscurity, and at the time of writing the State Department has never declared sovereignty over a given guano island to have expired.<sup>118</sup>

117. Cong. Globe, 34th Cong. 1st sess. (23 July 1856) 1697-1700 cited in Duffy Burnett, "The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands." 785-786  
118. *Ibid.*, 781.

More frequently, American sovereignty over guano islands lapsed not through official declaration but simply because citizens of rival nations began to occupy them instead. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, the United States engaged in a series of diplomatic disputes with Great Britain and Hawaii over atolls such as Baker and Palmyra Island.<sup>119</sup> Baker Island was a typical case. The United States claimed it in 1857, and its deposits were mined by the American Guano Co. from 1859 to 1878. But after American Guano departed, John T. Arundel & Co. began to mine it under a competing British claim, so that the Franklin Roosevelt administration felt moved to reassert U.S. sovereignty in 1936.<sup>120</sup> Even more confusingly, prospectors had a habit of “taking possession” of islands speculatively, as a way of staking out a claim to guano deposits in case they proved economically workable in the future. But in practice this attempted “extension of the state’s power”<sup>121</sup> over territory was only effective for as long as it remained inhabited. For as soon as the prospector left, what was to stop someone else from coming along and claiming it instead?

### **Bonins of Contention**

Discussion of sovereignty has so far been confined to the Western origins of the term, but here it is worth pausing to explore how Japanese understandings of the concept developed. In fact, to talk of an early modern Japanese conception of sovereignty is anachronistic. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese statecraft was conducted according to a model imported (with some modification) from Imperial China.<sup>122</sup> As such, the borders of political authority in

119. *Ibid.*, 780.

120. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, 104.

121. The phrase is from Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, 322.

122. Chinese: *huayi zhixu*; Japanese: *kai chitsujo* 華夷秩序.

Japan were delineated according to what David Howell calls a “geography of civilization”.<sup>123</sup>

The ruling Tokugawa Shogunate drew its legitimacy from its ability to unite the realm militarily, so as to “subjugate the barbarians” that were known to dwell on the periphery of the civilized world. Internally, the regime governed via domainal lords, each with their own band of military retainers, who pledged allegiance to the shogun and were enfeoffed with agricultural estates in return.

Externally, the Shogunate only conducted diplomatic relations with those states that sent it tribute in acknowledge of its paramountcy.<sup>124</sup> (Similarly, we might extend a cautious comparison to the universal authority of the Pope in pre-Reformation Christendom.) This meant that it refused to officially recognize Qing China, which insisted upon its own civilizational paramountcy. States such as Joseon Korea and the Ryukyu Kingdom, located in between the Tokugawa and the Qing, pragmatically sent tribute to both - an arrangement that would be inconceivable in a system of unitary sovereign states.

The civilizational logic undergirding Tokugawa statecraft is exhibited most clearly in the regime’s relations with its northerly neighbors. The Shogunate delegated management of the Ainu to a domain named Matsumae, which operated a series of fortified trading posts along the coast of Hokkaidō. Even though a territorial boundary between Wajinchi (“Japanese land”) and Ezochi (“barbarian land”) was delineated in 1669, this was conceived not as the line between Japanese and Ainu sovereignty but simply as “the limit to which Japanese customs extend”.<sup>125</sup> As Howell argues, “Japanese customs” often consisted of superficial external markings, so that it was possible for “Ainu” to adopt “Japanese” identity when

123. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Ch.6.

124. *Ibid.*, 131-132.

125. Hayashi Shihei, *Sankoku tsūran zusetsu* (1786)

dealing with Matsumae domain - simply by changing their name, hair-style and clothing.<sup>126</sup>

Brett Walker also minimizes the importance of the territorial border, describing the entire Ezochi as a “middle ground”.<sup>127</sup> Membership in the Tokugawa polity was determined not so much by territory or ethnicity as by ties of vassalage and superficial adherence to a set of civilizational norms.

The Shogunate first began to grapple with the protocols of Western diplomacy in the year 1800, when the appearance of Russian traders along the coastline of the Ezochi motivated it to express its suzerainty over the Ezochi in a format that the new aliens might understand. That same year, Inō Tadataka, a cartographer trained in European techniques, was despatched to survey the Ezochi coast.<sup>128</sup> The need to grasp Western concepts of international law became more urgent still in 1853, when Commodore Perry’s flotilla steamed into Edo Bay and negotiated a Treaty of Peace and Amity down the barrel of a gunboat. This blunt show of American force shattered the Shogunate’s claim to military paramountcy, and in doing so sent shock waves reverberating through the outer limits of Japanese politics. For the next fifteen years the Shogunate scrambled to curb the autonomy of rival domains, in an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to maintain Tokugawa rule over the archipelago. As part of this broad effort at retrenchment, it attempted to assert its authority over the Bonin Isles.

The Bonin Islands<sup>129</sup> lie a thousand kilometers to the south of mainland Japan. At the time their sole human inhabitants were a handful of settlers from Hawaii, complemented by a miscellany of castaways from American and British sailing ships that had stopped there to

126. *Ibid.*, Ch.5.

127. Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion* (University of California Press, 2006)

128. Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power*, 40.

129 Japanese: Ogasawara Shotō 小笠原諸島.

resupply.<sup>130</sup> In 1827 the *H.M.S Blossom* made landfall at the Bonins, and formally annexed it for the British Empire.<sup>131</sup> But since then neither the Admiralty nor the Colonial Office had made any further moves to assert its governance over the islands. When Perry's flotilla had stopped at the Bonins en route to Japan in 1853, the islanders' headman, a Massachusetts native by the name of Nathaniel Savory, had been sufficiently uncertain as to whether the British claim would be honored in the breach that he asked for the islands to be annexed by the USA. Perry declined the request, but was shrewd enough about the Bonins' strategic importance that during his visit to Edo he was careful to conceal their existence from the Shogunate.<sup>132</sup>

As it happened, the Shogunate was well aware both that the Bonins Islands existed and had in recent years been settled by a community of foreigners. In the wake of Perry's visit, it became anxious that the Bonins might be used as a beachhead from which to launch a military incursion. To forestall this, the Shogunate decided to assert its own dominion over the islands by establishing its own colony there. On 3 January 1862 it despatched an official envoy, Mizuno Tadanori, aboard the *Kanrin Maru*, a warship purchased from the Netherlands. Accompanying Mizuno was John Manjirō the fisherman who had travelled to the U.S., learned fluent English, and become the Shogunate's official translator upon his return to Japan. Along the way they stopped off to recruit settlers from Hachijōjima, the

130. Hyman Kublin, "The Ogasawara Venture (1861-1863)," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14, no. 1/2 (1951), 268.

131. Frederick William Beechey, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific and Beering's Strait* (Amsterdam: U.A. Israel, 1968), Ch.6.

132. Kublin, "The Ogasawara Venture," 268.

remotest of the Izu Isles.<sup>133</sup> Historically, Hachijōjima been used by the Shogunate as a prison colony; now, however, it was re-conceived as a launchpad for colonization of the Pacific.<sup>134</sup>

The *Kanrin Maru* made landfall at Port Lloyd, the Bonins' main settlement, on January 17th 1862. Mizuno's delegation then proceeded to enact, before the eyes of the bemused islanders, a careful creole of pageantry. Though his retainers were attired in full samurai regalia, Mizuno was careful to replicate many of the diplomatic protocols used by Perry nine years earlier. Like Perry, he arrived on a warship (the possibility of a merchant vessel having been rejected as insufficiently dignified). For the first twenty-four hours after arrival he stayed aboard ship while his aides conducted preliminary discussions with the islanders: "Have you people come here by the command of some sovereign?" The islanders answered that they had not.<sup>135</sup>

The next day Mizuno made landfall. He summoned Savory to a ceremonial tent that his retainers had erected on the beach, within clear range of the guns cocked aboard the *Kanrin Maru*.<sup>136</sup> When Savory explained that the Bonins had been annexed by Great Britain in 1827, Mizuno countered by citing an eighteenth century Japanese text<sup>137</sup> that claimed the Bonin Islands had been discovered in 1593 by the feudal lord Ogasawara Sadayori.<sup>138</sup> This text had circulated widely both inside Japan, where it had been largely debunked, and abroad, where it was accepted without question.<sup>139</sup> Tabohashi and Kublin both argue that the Shogu-

133. *Ibid.*, 271.

134. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu Shotō Tōkyō ikan 100-nen shi* (Tokyo: Tōkyō-to Tōsho Chōson Kai, 1981), 28.

135. Kublin, "The Ogasawara Venture," 273.

136. *Ibid.*, 275.

137. *Koji Ruien*. ([S.l.]: Jingu Shichō, 1912), 682-683.

138. Yamada Kiichi, *Nanshinsaku to Ogasawara Gunto* (Tokyo: Hōten Gijuku Shuppanbu, 1916), 62-66.

139. Kublin, "The Ogasawara Venture," 273.

nate knew the Ogasawara story was fraudulent, and hold Mizuno guilty of an “extraordinary example of the use of chicanery”. Regardless of whether he believed it genuine, the fact that Mizuno knew enough to deploy this text shows how quickly the Shogunate was learning the rules of the international state system to which it had been so brusquely introduced. For in citing the legend of Ogawara Sadayori, Mizuno asserted Tokugawa sovereignty over the Bonins not based on vows of vassalage or tributary relations, but on a claim to prior discovery of the islands by a putative Japanese national.

Mizuno then proceeded to draw up a new law code for what were to become known as the Ogasawara Islands, and Manjirō translated a version into English for the benefit of the islanders. Their rights to the land they currently cultivated would be respected, but they were forbidden from cultivating new land without permission. At the same time, Japanese settlers set about establishing a settlement on land unused by the existing island community.<sup>140</sup> Mizuno’s law code also placed restrictions on the coppicing of woodland and, most gallingly of all, on hunting. The islanders protested so vigorously at this last measure that it was later modified to permit hunting “only for the purpose of obtaining food for personal consumption”.<sup>141</sup>

As it happened, the Tokugawa colonization of the Bonin Islands was aborted soon afterwards. Only eighteen months after the *Kanrin Maru* made landfall at Port Lloyd, the settlers were ordered to abandon their homesteads and return to the mainland. The exact reasons for this decision remain unclear. Nevertheless, the Shogunate’s expedition established

140. Inamura Hiromoto, “Ogasawarajima ni okeru Shiseki oyobi Enkaku”, in *Rekishi Chiri* 48 (1926), 233.

141. Robertson, Russell, “The Bonin Islands.,” *Transactions*. 4(1876), 123, The Japanese version of Mizuno's law code is reproduced in Tanabe Taiichi, *Bakumatsu gaikō dan* (Tokyo: Toyamabō, 1898), 193.

a precedent of Japanese sovereignty over the Bonins which its successor regime was able to exploit. After overthrowing the Tokugawa regime in 1868, the new Meiji government set about redefining the borders of the Japanese state according to an explicitly territorial logic of sovereignty. The Ezochi was renamed Hokkaido, and a Colonization Bureau set up in order to integrate the barbarian periphery into the new nation state. Similarly the Ryūkyū Kingdom, once an autonomous tributary state, was annexed to form Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. And when, in 1875, the Meiji Interior Ministry formally declared the Bonin Islands to be Japanese sovereign territory, the British and American governments did not object.<sup>142</sup>

### **Bird Rush Part I: Tamaoki Han'emon Claims Torishima**

The last third of the nineteenth century saw a rapid growth in the global market for plumage. This growth was driven by a number of factors. Feathers had been in demand as items of adornment since classical times, but now fashion journals such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazar*, *McCalls* and *Good Housekeeping* began promoting a new trend in plumed hats, the most elaborate of which were mounted with entire bird carcasses.<sup>143</sup> (See [Figure 1.1](#)) Moreover in Europe, after a century of industrialization, middle class purchasing power was rising for the first time, bringing plumage-related adornments within the realm of affordability to a new class of consumers.<sup>144</sup> The centre of the millinery industry was Paris, but London benefitted from its connection to imperial markets to become the nexus of a plumage trade that extended to the furthest-flung corners of the known world. In 1883 Arthur Rimbaud, having forsaking poetry for a career as a merchant in the Horn of Africa, wrote a report on the (then unex-

142. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 18.

143. Robin W. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection* (University of California Press, 1974), 14-15.

144. Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Belknap Press, 2014), 87.

plored) Ogaden region in which he noted excitedly that at a spot on the banks of the River Webi, “hundreds of dollars’ worth of ostrich feathers” could be collected “in a few weeks”.<sup>145</sup> British India was also a major source of feathers, while entrepreneurs in the Cape Colony even set up ostrich farms dedicated primarily to feather production.<sup>146</sup>

By all accounts, the global feather trade had a devastating impact on bird populations during this period. For instance, it is widely held to be responsible for reducing the North American passenger pigeon population from an estimated two billion in the 1870s to extinction by the 1900s.<sup>147</sup> The market value placed on bird feathers during this period clearly encouraged hunters to kill birds with little regard for what would today be termed sustainability. In this sense, the global plumage market doubtless (as the market is wont to do) placed pressure on pre-existing common property resource regimes.<sup>148</sup>

The global spike in demand also encouraged bird hunters to go in search of previously untapped bird populations. One of these was Tamaoki Han’emon, a man who was to loom

145. Arthur Rimbaud, *Rapport sur l’Ogadine* (Harar, 10 December 1883) cited in Graham Robb, *Rimbaud* (Pan Macmillan, 2001), 348.

146 Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes* (Yale University Press, 2008).

147. Joel Greenberg, *A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon’s Flight to Extinction* (Bloomsbury USA, 2014)

148. Toshihiro Higuchi discusses how the raised market price for plumage, combined with revised Meiji game laws, decimated bird life on the main Japanese islands. See “Birds for New Japan: Bird Conservation and Reform, 1934-1952” delivered at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, 27 March 2010. The voluminous literature on environmental/resource economics offers a number of theoretical frameworks within which to consider the history of bird extermination. For instance, Garret Hardin famously argued that the problem of resource over-exploitation could be solved by the allocation of property rights, thereby encouraging sustainable husbandry of stocks. Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162:3859(13 December 1968) But Colin W. Clark soon added a twist to Hardin’s theory, constructing a model based on Antarctic whale stocks which showed that “depending on certain easily stated biological and economic conditions, extermination of the entire population may appear as the most attractive policy, even to an individual resource owner.” Colin W. Clark, “Profit Maximization and the Extinction of Animal Species,” *Journal of Political Economy* 81, no. 4 (1973)

large in the lives (and deaths) of North Pacific albatrosses. Tamaoki was born into a relatively affluent family of cattle-ranchers on Hachijōjima.<sup>149</sup> As a young man of twenty-two, he had been one of the settlers who signed up for Mizuno Tadanori's abortive colonization of the Bonin Isles.<sup>150</sup> Later, in 1876, he was recruited as an expert on cattle ranching to join the Meiji state's project to resettle the islands, but fell out with the project organizers and soon decided to return to Hachijōjima.<sup>151</sup> He did not abandon his interest in Pacific exploration, however. In 1886, he decided to mount an expedition under his own auspices, to an island known as Torishima. The island was only five square kilometers in area, unpopulated, and inhabited primarily by seabirds. Tamaoki had spotted it in 1862 while he was aboard the *Kanrin Maru* en route to the Bonin Islands.

Tamaoki's 1886 survey expedition was hardly an unqualified success. Torishima was walled by sheer cliffs and rocky inlets, and the sea was too stormy for his landing party to actually set foot on the island. Tamaoki was a man with impressive political connections, however, and the following year he recruited several high-profile public figures (including two journalists and the Governor of Tokyo) to form another expedition to the island.<sup>152</sup> He even persuaded the Japanese Postal Minister to have the package steamer *Meiji Maru* drop his party off on Torishima. This time they succeeded in landing, but the expedition soon went awry: when the seas turned rough, the *Meiji Maru* was unable to collect them and they were left marooned.<sup>153</sup> When the ship returned to Tokyo, however, the Japanese press quickly picked up the story, sharply criticizing the Tokyo government for abandoning the distressed

149. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi.*, 1067-1071.

150. Mochizuki Masahiko, "Tamaoki Han'emon to Torishima kaitaku," *Nantō Shigaku* 40(October 1992), 42.

151. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 19.

152. *Ibid.*, 22; Mochizuki Masahiko, "Tamaoki Han'emon to Torishima kaitaku," 45.

153. *Ibid.*, 44; Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 22-23.

pioneers. Even Tamaoki's own wife and daughters joined the effort, publicly pleading for the Postal Ministry to send a boat to rescue him.<sup>154</sup> Within a week another ship was dispatched to collect the twelve stranded men, this time successfully.<sup>155</sup> What might have been construed as a debacle was portrayed instead as heroism and eventually - when Tamaoki and his companions were rescued safely - as a triumph.

Ten days after his return to Tokyo, Tamaoki filed a petition for Torishima to be incorporated as Japanese sovereign territory under the jurisdiction of Tokyo Prefecture. At the time Torishima was known in Japan primarily as the island on which a young John Manjirō had been shipwrecked before being rescued by a whaler and taken to America.<sup>156</sup> But neither Manjirō nor anyone else had ever tried to claim the island as Japanese territory. In his petition, Tamaoki requested that as the colonizer of Torishima he be given a ten-year leasehold over the island, so as to promote there various industries such as farming, cattle-ranching, fishing and bird hunting.<sup>157</sup> He justified his request by mapping out a series of elaborate infrastructure projects to develop the island, including port facilities, houses and a comprehensive road network. (See [Figures 1.2](#) & [1.3](#)) Considering Tamaoki's expedition in itself provided the best evidence that Torishima lacked an adequate harbor, the port facilities must have been the most appealing of the proposed developments.<sup>158</sup>

Altogether, Tamaoki's application emphasized his intention to develop Torishima in a way that would allow for permanent human settlement on the island. But as Hiraoka Akitoshi argues, his primary motivation for staking a claim to the island was its bird-hunting potential.

154. "Tamaoki no saijo" *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 7 December 1887.

155. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 23-24.

156. Ibuse Masuji, *Jon Manjirō hyōryūki* (Tokyo: Bungakusha, 1947), 28.

157. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 26.

158. TMA 625 D4 19: Torishima ikkatsu.

The island's abundant avian population was hardly a secret: its name in Japanese means simply "bird island". And Tamaoki knew very well indeed that the quick returns from selling albatross feathers would far outweigh any revenue to be gained by developing Torishima for cattle-ranching. In economic terms at least, his primary motivation for claiming Torishima was its abundant supply of albatrosses.

Rival bird hunters knew this as well, and some of them bridled at Tamaoki's nerve in claiming exclusive rights to Torishima on the basis of a single, only partially successful survey trip. After all, had Tamaoki settled Torishima or had he been rescued from it? Tamaoki responded to the criticism by tripling his audacity. He submitted a further petition in which he pointed out that his settlement on Torishima would not only help to expand Japan's maritime possessions, but would perform a public service by providing emergency relief for shipwrecked sailors. Then he extended his request for leasehold by twenty years. Other firms also responded with their own petitions. On 21 February Saitō Rinzō, the manager of a marine products trading firm, requested that the Tokyo government grant him the right to travel to Torishima and reside, allegedly there for the purpose of fishing.<sup>159</sup> Tokyo passed the decision up to the Interior Ministry, and on 17 March 1887 the government settled on a compromise of sorts, though one distinctly favorable to Tamaoki, when it awarded him a free ten-year leasehold to the island.

In the years that followed the global market price for feathers soared, as did Japan's total feather exports.<sup>160</sup> (See [Figures 1.4](#) & [1.5](#)) Tamaoki's bird-hunting activities made him a

159. Mochizuki Masahiko, "Tamaoki Han'emon to Torishima kaitaku," 45.

160. Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, ed. *Nihon bōeki yōran* (Tokyo: Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, 1975), 30-31, 274; Great Britain Board of Trade, *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom in Each of the Last Fifteen Years from 1879 to 1893: No. 41* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1894) [C-7525].

rich man. In May 1889 he contracted to sell 100 catties<sup>161</sup> per year to the American firm J. Winckler & Co.<sup>162</sup> By 1892 he was wealthy enough to set up a Tokyo head office, and to move his main residence to the city the following year. His son earned a reputation as a *nouveau riche* playboy who lived a life of luxury, driving to school in a motorcar every day. He allegedly even owned his own yacht.<sup>163</sup>

The human settlement on Torishima also flourished, though not so lavishly. By 1902 there were 125 people residing on the island in a year-round settlement known as Tamaokimura, which even had its own school.<sup>164</sup> The prosperity was gained at the direct expense of Torishima's albatross population. Tamaoki's initial band of fifty-six hunters killed roughly 100,000 birds over the course of the 1888-89 winter nesting season.<sup>165</sup> According to one early account:

To catch the birds, they approach them in parties of four to prevent the bird from flying up. They can only run with outstretched wings until they come to a slope or get a favorable gust of wind ; so they are chased upward from below. Thus the birds in the reeds have to be surrounded, but the incubating birds are very easily approached. They are killed by striking them on the head with a club, and it is not difficult for a man to kill 100 to 200 birds daily.<sup>166</sup>

161. 1 catty = approx. 600g.

162. Umō Kenkyūkai, ed. *Umō to negu no hanashi: sono rekishi to bunka* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1993), 136-146. Tamaoki contracted with Winckler to sell the first hundred catties of feathers at ¥12 per catty, and at ¥17 per catty for the next thirty years. Although Winckler was paying well above the market price at the time, by 1893 albatross feathers were fetching ¥45-80 per catty on the Yokohama market.

163. Uchida Seinosuke, *Tori: watashi no shizen-shi* (1971), 41 This rather gossipy insight was later recollected by the esteemed ornithologist Uchida Seinosuke (see [Chapter Five](#)), who happened to attend the same middle school as the younger Tamaoki.

164. Kishōchō Torishima Kurabu 'Torishima' Henshū Inkai, *Torishima* (Tokyo: Tōe, 1967); "Torishima funka tansaku" *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, 2 September 1902.

165. Umō Kenkyūkai, *Umō to negu.*, 136-46. The annual nesting season lasted from October to April.

166. Hattori Tōru, "Bakadori no hanashi," *Dōbutsugaku Zasshi* 12(15 October 1889).

After killing the birds, the hunters plucked their feathers, packed them, then shipped them to Yokohama, from whence they were exported to Hong Kong and then on to London, Paris and New York. The process was then repeated annually, with the unsurprising result that Torishima's albatross population was soon reduced to a fraction of its former self. By one estimate, between 1888 and 1902, Tamaoki's settlers killed approximately five million birds on Torishima.<sup>167</sup>

### **Bird Rush Part II: Mizutani Shinroku Claims Marcus Island**

Tamaoki's success soon inspired others to stake their own claims to bird islands. One such entrepreneur was Koga Tatsushirō, who successfully leased the Senkaku (Chinese: Diaoyu) Islands from the Japanese government in 1896, shortly after their annexation during the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-5).<sup>168</sup> Another was Mizutani Shinroku, a sundries merchant based in the Bonin Islands. By his own testimony, Mizutani first visited Marcus Island when he was shipwrecked there in 1892. The following year he followed Tamaoki's example in petitioning the Tokyo government for the rights to Marcus Island, on which he claimed to have been shipwrecked the previous year. In his petition, Mizutani explained how he had erected a driftwood shelter on the island, and planned to return to mine its copious guano deposits. Like Tamaoki, Mizutani submitted a map and a development plan with his petition. (See [Figure 1.6](#)) If Tamaoki had deliberately underplayed his interest in albatrosses, then Mizutani went further. In his description of the island he omitted all mention of the island's potential as a source of bird feathers.<sup>169</sup> Unless Mizutani was an avid reader of the English-language

167. Umō Kenkyūkai, *Umō to negu*, 136-146.

168. The history of these islands shall be discussed in more detail in the [Epilogue](#).

169. TMA 625 D4 19: Torishima ikkatsu.

Hawaiian press, it seems unlikely that he knew of Captain Rosehill's prior claim to Marcus Island. But if he did, in his petition he did not mention it.

The Japanese government, however, knew that to assert sovereignty over Marcus Island would be a much more delicate matter than had been the case for Torishima. Torishima lay within sea-lanes connecting Tokyo to the Bonins, and the risk that a foreign power might object to it being claimed by Japan was negligible. The Interior Ministry had thus approved Tamaoki's petition in just a few months. Marcus Island was different. It lay over 1200 kilometers east of even the Bonins, Japan's furthest flung territory at the time. Claiming it would have been a bold extension of Japanese sovereignty far into the Pacific Ocean. To assert that Marcus Island, on which the sole evidence of Japanese settlement was a shack built by a castaway, was inalienable territory belonging to the Empire of Japan, would have been a grave commitment indeed. It would also potentially have been a provocative one. The Japanese government was already aware that the island had been ascribed at least two clearly non-Japanese names: Marcus and Weeks Island. The Interior Ministry ignored Mizutani's request.

Over the next four years, an increasing number of Japanese expeditions visited Marcus Island. Mizutani seems to have led the way. In 1896 he launched an expedition that was nominally in search of the legendary Grampus Island.<sup>170</sup> The expedition failed to find Grampus (which has not been located since), but did provide Mizutani with an opportunity to revisit Marcus. Perhaps this was his real intention all along, and the search for Grampus was

170. John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, From China to the North West Coast of America to Which Are Prefixed, an Introductory Narrative of a Voyage Performed in 1786, From Bengal, in the Ship Nootka Observations on the Probable Existence of a North West Passage; and Some Account of the Trade Between the North West Coast of American and China; and the Latter Country and Great Britain.* (London: Eographic Press, 1790), 95.

simply a pretext that enabled him to keep the existence of Marcus Island secret from rival-bird hunters. On his return, Mizutani submitted another, more detailed application, in which he announced that he had already established a colony on the island, consisting to date of ten men, ten women and three children. The settlers had already constructed dwellings for themselves and drilled wells to provide drinking water.<sup>171</sup> Their chief economic activity so far, he admitted, consisted of albatross hunting - but this was merely the first stage in an ambitious scheme to begin “cultivating”<sup>172</sup> the island with sugar, tobacco and garden vegetables.<sup>173</sup> This second application was ignored as well, initially. By this point, the secret of Marcus Island’s existence seems to have already got out: in April 1898 a sailor called Saitō Kiyozemon submitted a rival petition, claiming to have discovered Marcus as early as 1879.<sup>174</sup> This too was ignored by the Interior Ministry.

It was only on 24 July 1898 that the government finally decided to incorporate Marcus Island as sovereign Japanese territory. The official reason for the change of heart was that the Interior Ministry was now satisfied, based on Mizutani’s report, that his “bird hunting and cultivation activities have a very high chance of success, and would now be recognized according to international law as constituting effective occupation.”<sup>175</sup> But the timing of the

171. In fact these wells all proved brackish, but in 1902 William Alanson Bryan would observe that “the Japanese were able to catch enough water from the roofs in barrels, jars and boats to keep them well supplied with drinking water; and as they were especially careful to store all they could I concluded that there were periods of drought.” Bryan, “Monograph of Marcus Island,” 94.

172. Japanese: *kaikon* 開墾.

173. NAJ Main building 2A-011-00 No. 00805100: Minami Torishima wo Tōkyō-fu shozoku Ogasawarajima-shi no shokan to nasu Curiously, Mizutani did not reiterate his earlier intention to mine guano on the island, suggesting that he had abandoned the plan at this point.

174. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to ‘teikoku’ Nihon.*, 37. Saitō submitted his petition in April 1898, and claimed to have set foot on the island in 1893, the year after Mizutani was shipwrecked.

175. NAJ, Main building 2A-011-00 No. 00805100: "Minami Torishima wo Tōkyō-fu shozoku Ogasawarajima-shi no shokan to nasu".

decision is also significant. Two weeks earlier, on 6 July 1898, the United States Senate had passed the Newlands Resolution to formally annex the Kingdom of Hawaii. Annexation had been looming since 1887, when the U.S. ambassador to Hawaii had connived with American residents in Honolulu to launch a coup against the Hawaiian court.<sup>176</sup> But throughout the 1890s the Japanese foreign ministry had launched a concerted diplomatic effort to forestall this eventuality, which it (quite correctly) feared would result in a loss of Japanese influence in Hawaii.<sup>177</sup> The internal and external politics of the Kingdom of Hawaii shall be discussed in more detail in [Chapter Two](#); for the meantime suffice to say that Japan's annexation of Marcus may have been intended as a gentle riposte to American expansionism in the North Pacific. Certainly the strategic implications were not lost on the U.S. Navy, which submitted a memorandum to the State Department warning that the Japanese had "seized" the island and that this might jeopardize future plans for an undersea telegraph cable across the Pacific, "The Government of the United States," it was suggested, "may desire to demur to the action of Japan, or at least withhold its sanction to the transaction."<sup>178</sup>

### **Producing Sovereignty**

The denouement of the Marcus Island Incident played out as follows. The *Kasagi* arrived at Marcus on 27 July 1902, beating the *Julia E. Whalen* by three days. As there was no harbor on the island large enough for the warship, it waited off-anchor. As it did so, it burned coal to

176. William Michael Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar: U.S.-Japanese Rivalry Over the Annexation of Hawai'i, 1885-1898* (Naval Institute Press, 2011-05-15), 56-57.

177. FMA 1.4.2.1, Bei-Fu gappei ikken vol.4: Okuma to Motono, 30 March 1897; Motono to Okuma, 18 May 1897. The effort was ultimately unsuccessful, as the British Foreign Office did not regard its interests sufficiently threatened by American annexation of Hawaii to necessitate intervention.

178. NARA-II State Department 59.5.2 Miscellaneous records, Guano Islands: Acting Secretary of Navy Dept to Secretary of State, 3 August 1899.

remain in position until by 30 July, with its supplies running low, it was forced to return to Yokosuka before the *Whalen* arrived.<sup>179</sup> To meet the American ship, however, it left behind a landing party of marines under the command of a Lieutenant Akimoto. Bryan, the ornithologist, recounted the expedition's disappointment on arriving at Marcus Island to find "certain officers of the Japanese Government in possession of what we had anticipated to be American territory."<sup>180</sup>

Akimoto formally prohibited the crew from landing, but in a display of civility he did allow one sick crew member to come ashore to wash and recuperate. He also permitted Bryan and the geologist, Sedgwick, to make landfall so as to conduct scientific investigations. The pair spent one week on the island, during which Sedgwick prospected for guano deposits and Bryan catalogued as much of the remaining bird life as possible. The director of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Bryan seems to have made an excellent impression on Marcus Island's Japanese residents. One of them later told the *Asahi Shimbun* that "quite unlike that vulgar swindler Rosehill, he had a gentlemanly demeanor...he rushed about the island day and night conducting his investigations with the utmost diligence; we were all surprised at how much he exerted himself in his research."<sup>181</sup>

After seven days had passed, Rosehill informed Akimoto that his expedition required several more weeks to complete its survey on the island. As Rosehill later recounted:

He asked the lieutenant what he would consider his right or duty to do in the event that he [Rosehill] would insist upon remaining. The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders, glanced significantly at the sixteen armed marines drawn up in line and indicated that he would be compelled to enforce the orders left with him by the captain of the Japanese warship not to permit the Captain and his party to land or to remain on

179. Kokusai Kōhō Kenkyūshitsu, *Minami Torishima jiken*, 7.

180. Bryan, "Monograph of Marcus Island," 80.

181. "Minami Torishima jiken no kaiketsu" *Asahi Shimbun*, 6 September 1902.

the island. As there were sixteen men beside the lieutenant and about fifty stalwart Japanese fishermen, Captain Rosehill concluded that his instructions from the company which were to yield to a superior force, required him to depart.<sup>182</sup>

What ultimately decided the Marcus Island Incident? Clearly both sides made use of at least the threat of force, and commentators at the time speculated feverishly that the disputants might resort to violence. If the *Whalen* had beaten the *Kasagi*, things might conceivably have turned out differently. Instead, the dispute was conducted through the language of international law, with both sides brandishing diplomatic credentials from their respective governments to support their claims to the island. Yet the documents presented conflicting claims that were both, *prime facie*, of equal credibility, and international law of the period was simply too vague to resolve the matter decisively. Rosehill could assert prior discovery, as he had notified the U.S. State Department that he had “taken possession” of Marcus as early as 1889.<sup>183</sup>

But discovery alone was not enough to establish sovereignty, as evidenced by the series of prior guano island disputes in the Pacific. In 1903, Tokyo Imperial University’s international law research institute would prepare a brief on the Marcus Island Incident. The brief cited the precedent of the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), in which the European powers had agreed amongst themselves that two preconditions were necessary in order to assert sovereignty over uninhabited territory.<sup>184</sup> The first was that territory be occupied during

182. Kokusai Kōhō Kenkyūshitsu, *Minami Torishima jiken*, 8-9.

183. NARA-II State Department, 59.5.2 Miscellaneous records, Guano Islands: “Marcus or Weeks”.

184. A potential flaw in this argument, which the Japanese brief acknowledged, was that Japan had not been invited to participate in the Berlin Conference (which mainly dealt with European colonial policy toward Africa). It was thus not obvious that the principles agreed upon at Berlin would necessarily be considered applicable to the North Pacific, or that the United States would agree to be bound by them.

peacetime; the second was that occupation of said territory must be “reasonably continuous”.<sup>185</sup>

And therein lay the rub. If the American claim to Marcus, based as it was on one fleeting visit thirteen years previously, clearly did not demonstrate “reasonably continuous” occupation, then it was not immediately evident that Mizutani’s seasonal bird-hunting operation satisfied the criterion either. This legal ambiguity in large part explains the race to Marcus in July 1902. If the Mauser-toting crew of the *Whalen* had succeeded in ejecting Mizutani’s bird hunters from Marcus before the *Kasagi* arrived, would this be considered a peacetime occupation? Would the Japanese Foreign Ministry then have risked escalating the dispute by evicting the Americans in turn? Both sides understood that, in a conflict over territorial sovereignty, prior inhabitation counted for a large amount.

Shakespeare, writing *The Tempest* as the concept of territorial sovereignty begins to emerge in European diplomacy, pinpoints this inherent vulnerability when he has Prospero, the banished Duke of Milan, reflect ruefully of his vanished sovereignty: “*And to my state grew stranger, being transported.*”<sup>186</sup> The line puns on the double meaning of “transport”. Initially it was Prospero’s neglect of affairs of state (“rapt in secret studies”) that allowed his brother to usurp him. After banishment to his island cell he was physically transported away from his kingdom, his geographical estrangement thus cementing his political estrangement. It is the second sense which is more pertinent here: it is not easy to project sovereignty over a place without inhabiting it. The comparison with guano/plumage prospectors, and the states that backed them, might seem incongruous. But it is perhaps less so if we consider the projection of colonial sovereignty as a secular form of magic, rooted in what Drayton calls

185. *Ibid.*, 17.

186. *Tempest* I.II.76.

“the economics of Genesis”: “the idea that the command of resources was made legitimate by their most efficient use.”<sup>187</sup> If the production of sovereignty was predicated on the exploitation of territory, then inhabitation was a bare minimum requirement for the magic to be effective.

### **Destiny Manifest?**

In this sense, it is perhaps not so far-fetched to regard Captain Rosehill as a latter-day Prospero, whose claim to possession of Marcus had begun to erode as soon as he departed the island back in 1889. As he departed for a second time, his hopes of re-establishing his claim thwarted, his power over the island dwindled yet again. On his return to Honolulu, Rosehill continued to lobby the State Department to defend his claim to Marcus - preferably by dispatching a U.S. naval vessel to the island. When such help was not forthcoming, he petitioned the State Department to at least reimburse the Marcus Island Guano Co. for the expenses it had incurred on the *Julia E. Whalen*'s fruitless voyage.<sup>188</sup> This claim too was eventually dropped, and Marcus Island remains Japanese sovereign territory to this day.<sup>189</sup>

In hindsight it seems that the only benefit rendered by the whole expedition was the scientific work carried out by the ornithologist, William Alanson Bryan. But Bryan was more than just a man of science. He was also a man driven by strong passions, a man so horrified by the Marcus Island bird cull that, in his ostensibly scientific report, he could not help but observe acidly that every year “fifty thousand birds are there slaughtered as a sacrifice to the

187. Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 229.

188. “Uncle Sam Will Not Fight Over Marcus Island” *The Hawaiian Star*, 21 July 1902.

189. Marcus Island was occupied by the U.S. military after World War II, but was returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1968 at the same time as the Ogasawara Islands. For further discussion of the postwar U.S. occupation of Japanese island groups, see [Chapter Five](#).

cruel goddess of fashion.”<sup>190</sup> Bryan published his report in Honolulu in 1903, while Rosehill was still pressing his suit to the U.S. State Department. At the time of writing Bryan, who had been in communication with Rosehill, was confident that Marcus Island would be restored to American territory in the near future.<sup>191</sup> His faith in this outcome prompted him to include in his monograph a description of his explorations across the island that is so peculiar, it might fairly startle the contemporary reader:

On all sides of the island, usually well up from the water, was abundant driftwood and wreckage. Great logs of unknown origin, sometimes fifty feet in length, with broken branches and scarred trunks were common. But it was well toward the north point that a single great “Northwest” log had gone ashore and been driven a considerable distance inland. Applying a tape I found the log had been cut square, and into the butt end was driven a large wooden wedge. We regarded this bit of silent evidence as indicating the natural relation existing between the American continent and this all but lost island, and looked upon it as a forerunner of the ultimate annexation of Marcus by the United States, an event which since our visit has been fully recognized. To the naturalists the story of the voyage of this adventurous log, detailing its history from the time of leaving its home at Puget Sound, until at last, wind and current-driven across the Pacific, it reached its final resting place, high on this isolated spot, would indeed be interesting and instructive could it be accurately told.<sup>192</sup>

Even allowing for his faith in Manifest Destiny, what impelled Bryan to write that a piece of driftwood proved the “natural relation existing between the American continent and this all but lost island”? In part, surely, Bryan was using the log as a metaphor for his own long journey across the Pacific: from the mainland U.S.A. to Hawaii, and from there to godforsaken Marcus Island. To the two Americans stumping around the island, the one prospecting for guano he suspected he would never get the chance to mine, the other forlornly cataloguing

190. Bryan, “Monograph of Marcus Island,” 98.

191. *Ibid.*, 82.

192 *Ibid.*, 89.

bird species that were being wiped out before his eyes, the tree might perhaps have offered a morsel of comfort. The metaphor of the destiny-driven log helped Bryan and his compatriot to compensate for their own sense of frustration. It allowed them to seek solace in the fact that, whatever setbacks the Americans faced, Nature was on their side after all.

## 2. The Frontiers of Ornithology

### Labor, Capital and Knowledge on a Hawaiian Guano Island

*Laysan Island as a Site of Knowledge and Fertilizer Production*

*Early Knowledge of Albatrosses*

*Pacific Exploration, the Enlightenment and The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

*19th Century Ornithology: Romanticism, Nationalism and Conservation*

*Ornithologists Flock to Laysan Island*

*The Early History of Laysan*

*Asian Indentured Labor and the Growth of Hawaii's Plantation Economy*

*Birdshit and Bloodshed on Laysan, 1890-1900*

*"A True Bird Paradise": Producing Laysan's State of Nature*

#### **Laysan Island as a Site of Knowledge and Fertilizer Production**

William Alanson Bryan was not the only ornithologist to travel the North Pacific aboard guano ships. Another 3,500 kilometers east of Marcus Island, some 1,500 kilometers to the west of Honolulu, lies another, similarly minuscule oceanic atoll by the name of Laysan. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the island became renowned as a pilgrimage site for naturalists seeking to catalogue its biodiversity. In Laysan, adventurous ornithologists saw a “true bird paradise”: not only a rich site for fieldwork but also a place in which to commune with the transcendental. In the words of the German naturalist Hugo von Schauinsland, who

visited Laysan in the summer of 1897:

The esthetic impression which the island commands is quite sobering and really very grandiose, perhaps also magnified by the thought of the loneliness and solitude that is this tiny grain of sand amidst the vast watery desert. It was just exactly this that had considerable influence on our spirit. I never understood so well Rousseau's exhortation about returning to nature as I did right here. Here, we learned to understand anew the language of nature, which rarely rings in our ear amongst the noise of culture and civilization. Here we feel like we are back in our true home, withheld from so many of us during our peregrination through modern life...<sup>193</sup>

But what Schauinsland experienced as a State of Nature was also socially constructed space, not so much the antithesis of modern civilization as the extension of it. Schauinsland, Bryan and other ornithologists were only able to visit Laysan because it had recently become the site of a guano mine operated by the Hawaii-based firm of Hackfeld & Co. and worked by indentured laborers from Japan. Not everyone on Laysan found it as tranquil as Schauinsland did. The Laysan guano mine was dogged by poor labor relations, that would eventually erupt into a fatal bout of violence in which an American overseer shot dead two Japanese miners who were demanding improved working conditions on the island.

This chapter explores the frontiers of two production processes that intersected on Laysan Island at the end of the 19th century: the production of knowledge about Nature and the production of guano fertilizer. Both types of production involved work: the scientific work of naturalists who travelled to the island, recorded field notes, and collected specimens; and the wage labor of the miners who shoveled the acrid, powdery phosphate for trans-shipment to distant agricultural markets. Both were in part socially constituted. The produc-

193. Hugo H. Schauinsland and Miklos D.F. Udvardy (trans.), "Three Months on a Coral Island (Laysan)," *Atoll Research Bulletin* 432(February 1996)

tion of scientific knowledge depended on guano production, and guano production on Laysan only became possible due to the conditions of Hawaii's sugar plantation economy in the 1890s. Marx famously claimed that labor produces capital - Second Nature - from First Nature.<sup>194</sup> But the reverse is also true: labor and capital are necessary ingredients in the production of First Nature.

The first part of this chapter traces the production of knowledge about albatrosses since the sixteenth century, when reports of birds by that name began filtering back to Europe from voyages the southern latitudes. Until the mid-eighteenth century, published descriptions of albatrosses were heavily reliant on intermediary accounts provided by sailors; naturalists were only able to examine the birds first-hand by securing passage on state-backed expeditions of discovery such as those led by Cook, Bougainville and Bering. Partly as a result of these expeditions, birds in general (and albatrosses in particular) came to be associated with new Romantic ideas of Nature, which in turn became linked with notions of spiritual power, moral purity and national essence. This helped to power a craze for ornithology and for wilderness that lasted throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in a series of campaigns for wild bird protection in Britain and America.

The second part of this chapter traces a different history, of Laysan's integration into the Kingdom of Hawaii and the global economy, through the opening of a guano mine on the island in the 1890s. The Laysan mine relied on the availability of cheap indentured Japanese labor, and attention shall be paid to the political economy of labor in Hawaii before and after U.S. Annexation in 1898. The opening of the Laysan mine also rendered the island's copious

194. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (New York, NY: Blackwell, 1984), 33.

bird population accessible to naturalists for the first time, sending ornithologists racing to catalogue its avian biodiversity. The chapter concludes by discussing the representational technologies (essays, taxidermy, landscape painting and diorama) that ornithologists used to represent Laysan's albatrosses, and at the same time render the island a pristine, because unpeopled, State of Nature.

### **Early Knowledge of Albatrosses**

Early naturalists expended great energy on the collection and cataloguing of exotic bird specimens. The stakes were high. In the intellectual environment that later became known as the Enlightenment, the science of taxonomy was accorded possibly the highest prestige of all, being regarded by its practitioners as the means to understand the grand design of the Creator. With its overtones of grand metaphysical import, the discipline of natural philosophy attracted some of the most erudite minds of the era, and the patronage of princes keen to demonstrate their beneficence. As Richard Drayton puts it, "Nature was the theatre in which power might prove its virtue."<sup>195</sup> Carl Linnaeus, whose system of binomial classification became the foundational framework for contemporary taxonomy, used a bluntly Biblical allegory when he boasted to the Swedish royal family that his science was nothing less than "the light that will lead the people who wander in the darkness."<sup>196</sup> As Lisbet Koerner points out, the complete categorization of the variety of Creation was at this point not yet seen as an inherently implausible project: at the turn of the eighteenth century, the total number of plant

195. Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 44.

196. Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2001-04-16), 23.

species known to European naturalists did not exceed 20,000.<sup>197</sup> Even mounting evidence of the extent of biodiversity could be construed as evidence of divine intent: according to John Ray the vast variety of species only revealed "how great must needs be the Power and Wisdom of him who form'd them all!"<sup>198</sup>

The surest way to acquire intellectual credibility as a taxonomist was to discover new taxa. This in turn required the acquisition of specimens hitherto unfamiliar to the scientific community, a task that could entail considerable time and expense. Where feasible, naturalists travelled to conduct observation in the field themselves, returning with samples they had collected and preserved personally, and which then became the data on which they could build their research and thus their intellectual career. This was the trajectory followed by Linnaeus in his much mythologized tour of Lapp hinterland, and by the ornithologist George Edwards, who made his bones among the Royal Society fellows by publishing a series of drawings based on his travels in France, Holland and Norway.<sup>199</sup> But in order to acquire specimens from Creation's further reaches, naturalists relied on accounts and specimens garnered from third parties. It was in this manner that the first knowledge of "the albatross" was produced.

The word itself derives from the Portuguese word *alcatras*, which itself likely derives from the Arabic *al-ġattās*, meaning a type of sea eagle. During the Age of Discovery, Iberian navigators used "*alcatras*" to describe large seabirds that they sighted in the tropics. For

197. *Ibid.*, 34.

198. John Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1714), 8 cited in Drayton, *Nature's Government.*, 21.

199. Koerner, *Linnaeus.*, Ch3; A. Stuart Mason, 'Edwards, George (1694–1773)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, January 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8537>. Last accessed 29 January 2015.

Columbus, the *alcatras* was a type of piratical shit-eater. Approaching Hispaniola for the first time in 1492:

they saw a *Rabo de Junco*, which tho' it be a Sea-fowl does not rest upon it, but flies always in the air, pursuing the Alcatrazes, till it makes them drop their excrement from fear, which it catches in the Air for its Nourishment, and thus maintains its self on the Sea.<sup>200</sup>

Hans Staden, a Hessian captured by Tupinambá Indians in the 1540s, described a visit to an island off the coast of Brazil that the Portuguese called *Insula de Alkatrazes*, for its “many seabirds, called Alkatrazes, these are easy to catch, and it was at the time they rear their young.”<sup>201</sup> As the first English privateers began venturing into the southern latitudes, derivations of *alcatras* began to slip into their accounts as well. As early as 1582 one sailor recorded in his diary that “Ned Gylman took an alcatrash on the mayntopmast yerd, which ys a foolysh byrd but good lean rank meat.” Two years later Hakluyt wrote of “maryners, which had the pictures of a byrde, called Alcatrazzi, in silver upon their bonnetts.” A century afterwards, albetrosses, albitrosses and alगतrosses were being commonly sighted in the West Indies and around the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>202</sup>

Much ink has been spilled attempting to determine which contemporary taxa these early sightings corresponded to, with a consensus that the majority of these so-called

200. Awnsham Churchill and Jean Barbot, *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Some Now First Printed From Original Manuscripts, Others Now First Published in English: With a General Preface, Giving an Account of the Progress of Navigation, From Its First Beginning* (Walthoe, 1732), 583.

201. Hans Staden, Albert Tootal and Sir Richard Francis Burton, *The Captivity of Hans Staden of Hesse, in Ad 1547-1555, Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil* (Hakluyt Society, 1874)

202. ["albatross, n." OED Online](#). December 2014. Oxford University Press. Last accessed 29 January 2015.

“albatrosses” were most likely pelicans or frigate birds.<sup>203</sup> However it is not the purpose of this study to determine what kind of bird sailors "really" saw. Rather, the aim here is to determine the social practices through which knowledge of the albatross was produced. What is evident is that sailors, to the extent that they took an interest in ornithology at all, did so primarily for pragmatic reasons.<sup>204</sup> Thus did the pirate Shelvocke describe albatrosses as "those feathered harbingers of the Cape", and Robinson Crusoe, marooned on his island, lament that "I saw abundance of fowls, but knew not their kinds; neither when I killed them could I tell what was fit for food, and what not."<sup>205</sup>

Prior to the mid-eighteenth century, these accounts by sailors and other voyagers formed a critical resource for naturalists seeking to construct taxonomic distinctions between seabird specimens. In 1681 Nehemiah Grew catalogued one item in the Royal Society's

203. David G Medway, "The Identity of the Chocolate Albatross *Diomedea Spadicea* of Gmelin, 1789 and of the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea Exulans* of Linnaeus, 1758," *Notornis* 40(1993)

204. Sailors did sometimes attach mystical associations to other seabirds, however. Bretagne fisherman were said to believe that storm petrels contained the souls of skippers who had mistreated their crew in a previous life. A member of the second Cook expedition recalled that "several of the ship's company who had made extensive and more agreeable voyages in East Indian waters, were joking over the East Indian's belief in the transmigration of souls, and about the hardships of our voyages. They suggested that the Captains and Chief Mates who had enjoyed a very indolent and lazy time in their cabins in warm and calm East Indian waters, were banished as a punishment to these cold regions to cheer up the albatrosses and stormy petrels, always restlessly hunting for food." Even if these beliefs were held with any seriousness, however, they did not prevent sailors from regularly killing albatrosses for food or sport. Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Yale University Press, 1992), 154-155; Michael Brooke, *Albatrosses and Petrels Across the World* (2004), 4; Arthur Frederick Gotch, *Birds--their Latin Names Explained* (Blandford Press, 1981), 190.

205. Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World By the Way of the Great South Sea.*; Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner Who Lived Eight and Twenty Years All Alone in an Un Inhabited Island on the Coast of America, Near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke. Having Been Cast on Shore By Shipwreck, Wherein All the Men Perished But Himself. With an Account How He Was At Last as Strangely Deliver'd By Pyrates.* (London: T. Cox, 1719) Ch.4.

collection as:

The HEAD of the MAN of WAR, called also the Albitrosse. Supposed by some to be the Head of a Dodo, but it seems doubtful. That there is a Bird called the Man of War, is commonly known to our Sea-men; and several of them who have seen the Head here preserved, do affirm it to be the Head of that Bird; which they describe to be a very great one, the Wings whereof are eight feet over. And *Ligon, (b)*,<sup>206</sup> speaking of him, saith, That he will commonly fly out to Sea, to see what Ships are coming to Land, and so return...<sup>207</sup>

Eleazar Albin, examining a separate skull specimen (See [Figure 2.1](#)) nearly sixty years later, also equated the “Albitross” with the Man of War Bird, which he claimed to have seen firsthand during a voyage to Jamaica:

the Shape of its Bill shews it to be a Bird of Prey living mostly on Fish, which it takes from the Bird called the Booby, who is very dextrous in catching the *Flying Fish*, when hunted or chased by the *Dolphins*; as soon as the *Booby* has taken some of them, the *Man of War* comes down with great Swiftness upon him, the other Bird immediately disgorges the Fish, which the *Man of War* catches before it falls in the Water: This I have seen them do often when I was in the *Indian Seas*.<sup>208</sup>

Linnaeus, who coined the new taxon *Diomedea exulans* in the definitive tenth edition of his

206. Richard Ligon, and Karen Ordahl Kupperman. *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (Hackett Publishing, 2011), 114: "But there is a Bird they call, a Man of war, and he is much bigger than a Heron, and he flies out to Sea upon discoveries (for they never light upon the Sea) to see what ships are coming to the Island; and when they return, the islanders look out, and say, a ship is coming, and find it true. I have seen one of them, as high as I could look, to meet us twenty leagues from land; and some others, almost as big as Ducks, that in an evening came to meet in a flock of twenty, or there about, and they made divers turns upon the ship, a little before Sun-setting; and when it grew dark, they lighted upon the ribs of the ship, and with little nooses of packthread, the Sailors caught them; they were very fat and good."

207. Nehemiah Grew, *Musaeum Regalis Societatis or a Catalogue & Description of the Natural and Artificial Rarities Belonging to the Royal Society and Preserved At Gresham College, Made By Nehemjah Grew., Whereunto is Subjoyned the Comparative Anatomy of Stomachs and Guts* (W. Rawlins, 1995), 73.

208. Eleazar Albin, *A Natural History of Birds* (author and sold, 1738).

*Systema Naturae*, almost certainly never saw a specimen of the bird himself, instead relying heavily on Albin's description.<sup>209</sup> This accounts both for his claim that the species "lives between the oceanic tropics and the Cape of Good Hope" and the distinctly martial moniker he attached to it: in Greek myth, Diomedes was a warrior who was driven by a storm onto the coast of southern Italy, where he died an old man. After his death his companions were turned into birds.<sup>210</sup>

The only prominent naturalist who argued that the "Man of War birds" sighted near England's Caribbean colonies constituted a separate species to Shelvocke's "feathered harbingers of the Cape" was George Edwards, who in 1747 had the chance to examine two stuffed specimens that had been brought to London from South Africa. (See [Figure 2.2](#)) Edwards complained of his colleagues' reliance on "Descriptions... such as are commonly given by Voyagers (who for the most Part are very general, and none but imperfect Ideas of natural Things are received from them)."<sup>211</sup> Yet Edwards too relied on the accounts of lay

209. David G Medway, "The Identity of the Chocolate Albatross *Diomedea Spadicea* of Gmelin, 1789 and of the Wandering Albatross *Diomedea Exulans* of Linnaeus, 1758," *Notornis* 40(1993), 154-6.

210. Gotch, *Birds--their Latin Names Explained*, 190. Linnaeus's classification works as a pun: *exulans* can mean both "exiled" (an allusion to marooned Diomedes) and "wandering" (in reference to what Linnaeus took to be the albatross's extraordinarily wide range).

211. George Edwards, *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds: And of Some Other Rare and Undescribed Animals, Quadrupedes, Reptiles, Fishes, Insects. In Four Parts* (at the College of Physicians, 1751) Vol.II No.88 "Albin confounds this Bird with one called in the *West-Indies*, the *Man-of-War* Bird, wherein he is wrong; for, on examining Voyagers on that Head, I find they make *the Man-of-War* a much smaller Bird; and they who have mentioned the *Albatross* make it of the first magnitude of Water-Fowl; so that I can by no Means agree that they are the same Birds. I know of no Figure extant of this Bird: or of any Description of it, but such as are commonly given by Voyagers (who for the most Part are very general, and none but imperfect Ideas of natural Things are received from them) on which Account I thought this Figure and Account might be favourably received by the Encouragers of this work."

sailors in order to make his case: “for, on examining Voyagers on that Head, I find they make *the Man-of-War* a much smaller Bird; and they who have mentioned the *Albatross* make it of the first magnitude of Water-Fowl; so that I can by no Means agree that they are the same Birds.”<sup>212</sup>

### **Pacific Exploration, the Enlightenment and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner***

Edwards’ analysis would eventually carry the day, but not until naturalists circumvented their reliance on second-hand accounts by finding a means to observe and collect albatross specimens directly. They achieved this through a novel form of collaboration between amateur scholars and state-backed voyages of exploration. Whereas the King of Spain had dispatched Magellan to the Spice Islands with orders to convert the Indios to Christianity, eighteenth century expeditions sallied forth in the name of an avowedly secular Enlightenment rationality. No self-respecting explorer could therefore afford to leave port without a naturalist aboard. Bougainville’s voyage to the South Seas was equipped with a whole scientific team, including an astronomer and a naturalist, Philibert Commerson.<sup>213</sup> Vitus Bering, exploring Kamchatka on behalf of Tsar Peter I, also made sure to recruit two official naturalists; when they abandoned the expedition in Siberia due to ill-health, he made sure to send for a replacement from Europe immediately.<sup>214</sup> And the Royal Navy dispatched the first Cook expedition nominally so as to observe the transit of Venus, but also with secret orders to

212. *Ibid.* Vol.II No.88.

213. Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, 76-80; Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 216-8.

214. Jones, *Empire of Extinction*, 23. That replacement was Georg Wilhelm Steller, after whom Steller’s Albatross would eventually be named.

sail south in search of Australia.<sup>215</sup>

Study of seabirds was hardly a top priority for either the backers of or the participants in these expeditions. Navies were, unsurprisingly, interested in research that had military application - primarily the charting of new terrains and determining whether they might be suitable for colonization. And in fact the period of cooperation between the state and gentlemen naturalists was fairly brief. In Britain, friction with the Admiralty led to Joseph Banks declining to join the second Cook expedition, and he was replaced by Johann and Georg Forster, with whom Cook was to quarrel constantly. For the third expedition the Admiralty decided to conduct its own scientific studies internally rather than continue dealing with truculent independent scholars.<sup>216</sup>

Neither were the naturalists who took part in these expeditions principally interested in ornithology; their focus was generally botanical. But characteristically for the eighteenth century, they tended to be wide-ranging in their interests and took advantage of the opportunity to collect as broadly as possible. The interminable ocean-bound stretches of their journeys may also have helped to focus interest on seabirds. In the 1740s, during his voyage with Bering in Kamchatka, Steller managed to collect a set of bird skins that would later be used to identify a new species: “Steller’s Albatross”.<sup>217</sup> (We shall hear more about this particular taxon in [Chapter Five](#).) But he died in Siberia before he was able to publish his

215. Charles E Herdendorf, “Captain James Cook and The Transits of Mercury and Venus,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 21, no. 1 (1986).

216. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 47 Bernard Smith characterizes the research agendas of the three Cook voyages as oriented toward botany, meteorology and ethnography respectively.

217. Steller’s specimen collection did arrive safely, and years later they were examined by another German naturalist, Peter Simon Pallas. In accordance with the Linnaean classification system, Pallas is therefore credited with discovering the species *Diomedea albatrus* (Pallas, 1769). But many writers have referred to it colloquially as Steller’s Albatross. See Oliver L Austin Jr, “The Status of Steller’s Albatross,” *Pacific Science* 3(1949)

findings, and as a result his work languished in relative obscurity for decades.

On 3 February 1769, somewhere south of the tip of Tierra del Fuego, a more fortunate naturalist stood on the deck of the *Endeavour* and took pot-shots at albatrosses. Two days later Joseph Banks, along with the rest of the ship's crew, dined on them and declared them: "so good that every body commended and Eat heartily of them tho there was fresh pork upon the table."<sup>218</sup> The first Cook voyage is significant for the history of albatross taxonomy in that, for the first time it allowed scientists to observe and collect albatross specimens directly. Together with Daniel Solander, a former a student of Linnaeus, and Sydney Parkinson, the expedition's draughtsman, Banks succeeded in collecting an array of specimens in the Southern Ocean, all shot from deck-side, as well as a series of life-drawings supporting Edwards' theory that albatrosses and man of war birds were distinct species.<sup>219</sup> (See [Figure 2.3](#))

Banks returned from his voyage aboard the *Endeavour* to instant celebrity, on a scale that initially eclipsed that even of Cook himself. He succeeded in parlaying his newfound prestige into a knighthood, the presidency of the Royal Society and directorship of the botanical gardens at Kew.<sup>220</sup> Although Solander, in a letter to Linnaeus, privately disparaged his employer as a mere wealthy amateur, Banks would become a model for future generations of aspiring naturalists, who came to view transit aboard a military expedition as an effective route to accessing the exotic flora and fauna specimens upon which to build their careers.

218. Joseph Banks and J. C. Beaglehole, *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks, 1768-1771* (Sydney: Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales in association with Angus and Robertson, 1962) vol.2: 5 February 1769. Banks also added a brief recipe: "The way of dressing them is thus: Skin them overnight and soak their carcasses in Salt water till morn, then parboil them and throw away the water, then stew them well with very little water and when sufficiently tender serve them up with Savoury sauce."

219. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 36.

220. Koerner, *Linnaeus*, 155.

Alexander von Humboldt, inspired by his friendship with the younger Forster, initially attempted to join Napoleon's campaign in Egypt before securing sponsorship from the King of Spain to join an official expedition to Latin America. Years later, Charles Darwin would travel to the Galapagos as a fee-paying passenger aboard the *H.M.S. Beagle*. A host of less illustrious scholars attempted similar journeys.

The South Sea expeditions of the 18th century also had a broader effect on European intellectual culture. The reading public avidly consumed accounts and images of the voyages, and the Enlightenment imagination came to regard the Pacific as an unspoiled idyll where indigenes lived free and happy, innocent of the ravages of civilization. (See [Figure 2.4](#)) Bougainville wrote of Tahiti that "I thought I was transported into the garden of Eden". Banks, after visiting the same island, recounted that "the scene we saw was the truest picture of an arcadia of which we were going to be kings that the imagination can form...these happy people may almost be said to be exempt from the curse of our forefather."<sup>221</sup> As Kerry Howe argues, this sort of arcadian lyricism was largely a reworking of a much older idea that had spurred Columbus to search for the Garden of Paradise, and inspired Montaigne's essay *On Cannibals*. Like their predecessors, eighteenth century explorers carried the trope of the "noble savage" with them in their heads before they even arrived in the South Seas. But though the ideas were old, the discovery of yet another earthly locale in which to ground them served to renew their vitality in the European imagination. Thus could Diderot, in the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, voice his critique of European civilization through the mouths of Tahitian savages. By 1779, so powerful was the trope of an Edenic Pacific that many concluded that the killing of Cook on Hawaii must have stemmed from civilization's

221. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History*, 6-7.

corrupting effects on innocent natives.<sup>222</sup> Cook must have brought it upon himself.

By reviving the notion of an earthly paradise, these narratives of South Sea voyages helped fashion from the Pacific a binary between unspoiled Nature and a degraded (and degrading) Civilization. In doing so, they contributed to a growing Romantic reaction against the pretensions of Enlightenment rationality. This Romanticism served as the bridgehead by which God, transmuted into a particular idea of Nature, entered the modern world. No single text evoked this tendency toward what Keith Thomas calls “the divinisation of Nature”<sup>223</sup> more than Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.<sup>224</sup> The poem, which tells the story of a ship’s accursed expedition into the Southern Ocean, was directly inspired by the voyages of discovery.<sup>225</sup> But it was a riposte to naturalists’ claims to objectivity:

I can easily believe that there are more invisible creatures in the universe than visible ones. But who will tell us what family each belongs to, and what their respective distinguishing characters may be? What do they do? Where do they live? Human wit has always circled round a knowledge of these things without ever attaining it...<sup>226</sup>

The *Rime* also drew heavily on the Burkean concept of the Sublime: the notion that certain hostile environments such as mountains and seascapes can induce in the viewer an aestheti-

222. *Ibid.*, 43-4.

223. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 261.

224. William Wordsworth, *et al.*, *Lyrical Ballads: The Text of the 1798 Edition With the Additional 1800 Poems and the Prefaces* (London: Methuen, 1963)

225. As Bernard Smith has discovered, Coleridge’s childhood mathematics tutor had previously served as the astronomer aboard the second Cook expedition. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 45.

226. The epigraph, taken from Thomas Burnet’s *Archæologiæ Philosophicæ*, continues: “But I do not doubt that it is beneficial sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as in a picture, the image of a grander and better world; for if the mind grows used to the trivia of daily life, it may dwindle too much and decline all together into worthless thoughts. Meanwhile, however, we must be on watch for the truth, keeping a sense of proportion so that we can tell what is certain from what is uncertain and day from night.” Thomas Burnet, “*Archæologiæ Philosophicæ: Or, the Ancient Doctrine Concerning the Originals of Things*,” (1736)

cally pleasing sensation of terror. (“Alone, alone, all alone / Alone on a wide wide sea!”) This aesthetic response was itself an innovation, as up until the 1760s travelers had regarded the seashore or the peaks of England’s Lake District with disgust if not outright loathing.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, by crafting the albatross into the avatar of a pantheistic “tutelary spirit”, Coleridge helped to elevate this newfound taste for wilderness onto an explicitly mystical plane.

The central poetic image of the *Rime*, of a sailor shooting an albatross and bringing down a curse upon himself and his ship was suggested to Coleridge by William Wordsworth during a walk across the Quantocks one autumn afternoon in 1797. Wordsworth had recently been reading Shelvocke’s *Voyages*, which describes:

a disconsolate black Albatross, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hatley, my second Captain, observing in one of his melancholy fits, that this bird which was always hovering near us, imagined, from his colour, that it might be some ill omen .... he, after some fruitless attempts, at length shot the Albatross, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it ...<sup>228</sup>

From this fragment of the historical record, Coleridge wove an elaborate metaphysical morality tale in which the albatross is rendered as an allegory for the Christ figure (its corpse, hung around the mariner’s neck, forms a crucifix). First published in 1798 in Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, the poem proved so popular that within a hundred years it was reprinted more than twenty times in Britain and the United States, culminating in a spike of interest in the decade surrounding its centenary. (See [Figure 2.5](#)) Coleridge claimed that the reason for

227. Alain Corbin and Jocelyn Phelps, *The Lure of the Sea : The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750-1840* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 258-261.

228. George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World By the Way of the Great South Sea* (1726), 19.

the poem's popularity was the large number of purchases from sailors who thought they were buying a sea-shanty.<sup>229</sup> But the poem's cultural impact went far beyond that, inspiring a host of literary references and spawning several idioms that lodge in the English language to this day.<sup>230</sup>

### **19th Century Ornithology: Romanticism, Nationalism and Conservation**

Part of the reason for the *Rime*'s extraordinary popularity was that it successfully tapped into what Keith Thompson describes as "that growing concern about the treatment of animals which was one of the most distinctive features of late-eighteenth century middle-class culture."<sup>231</sup> Its concluding homily - "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small; / For the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all." - found ready ears among a readership that was learning to assert its civility, *vis a vis* both foreigners and the more barbarous classes, in terms of its treatment of animals.

But the *Rime* also chimed with a set of concerns that were quite distinct from animal welfare, and more closely intertwined with the growing ideological power of Nature as a concept in itself. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Nature came to be touted as a source of spiritual strength, moral renewal, or national essence - sometimes all three at once.

229. Notwithstanding the *Rime*'s apparently popularity among seamen, recipes for albatross continued to circulate among mariners well into the nineteenth century: "The people (Sailors) have made a good dinner of the Albatrosses cooked in the form of a sea-pie. They say that by soaking them in water over night they get rid of any fishy taste they may be supposed to have." H. Weeks' journal, February 1841, cited in Medway, "The Identity of the Chocolate Albatross," 189-198.

230. See for example Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (New York: Mershon Co., 1818); Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs Du Mal* (Paris: G. Supot, 1917) "L'albatros" Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) An unwanted burden is frequently referred to as an "albatross around one's neck", or simply as an "albatross".

231. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 144.

As Raymond Williams writes:

The 'state of nature' and the newly personified idea of Nature, then played critical roles in arguments about, first, an obsolete or corrupt society, needing redemption and renewal, and, second, an 'artificial' or 'mechanical' society, which learning from **Nature** must cure... one of the most powerful uses of nature, since IC18, has been in this selective sense of goodness and innocence. **Nature** has meant the 'countryside', the 'unspoiled places', plants and creatures other than man.

The Early Romantic notion of an awe-inspiring (because terrifying) Sublime thus gave way to a view of Nature as mystical but also vulnerable to human encroachment - not so much threatening as threatened by the churn of industrial civilization. In the process, Nature frequently came to be invoked not as an inspiration for radical social renewal, but as the source of divinely mandated order in the face of crumbling social hierarchies. An elderly Wordsworth, fulminating against the hordes of working class tourists that a proposed railway line would unleash upon his beloved Lake District, could write of Furness Abbey that:

"Sacred as a relic of the devotion of our ancestors deserves to be kept, there are temples of Nature, temples built by the Almighty, which have still higher claim to be left un-violated."<sup>232</sup>

In 1848, Europe's year of Revolution, the *Rime*'s closing stanza was repackaged to become a staple of the Anglican choir-book:

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high and lowly,  
And ordered their estate.

232. William Wordsworth and Ernest De Selincourt, *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 162.

The Victorian cult of Nature reached its peak between 1885 and 1900. During this period a number of organizations were formed on both sides of the Atlantic dedicated to bird conservation. The Selborne League was established in Britain in 1885, named in honor of the nature essayist Gilbert White. That same year *The Times* of London inaugurated the Anti-Plumage League, with an op-ed denouncing the recent trend for feather-wearing and ornamental stuffed animals in general. The two societies merged the following year to form the Selborne Society, which aimed to recruit the kind of person "who loves every stone of the old abbey, its ancient fame, will strive to preserve also the trees and flowers that gather round its walls, and the birds that have in its desecrated altars a nest where they may lay their young." (A mission statement that, in its mingled reverence for English heritage, landscape and wildlife, would surely have warmed the heart of Wordsworth.)<sup>233</sup> In the United States, the first Audubon Society was founded in New York 1886, and regional societies began to proliferate through the 1890s. We can guess at the class background of these organizations' membership from the fact that they pledged not only to "refrain from wearing the feathers of any birds not killed for purposes of food" - but also to discourage their friends and also servants from doing likewise.<sup>234</sup> Feathers had been used as luxury apparel since antiquity, so it is telling that this elite concern for the welfare of birds manifested itself publicly at the very moment when the rising purchasing power of middle and working class consumers made plumage affordable as an item of mass consumption.

Ornithologists were prolific manufacturers of Victorian Nature. A tide of aspiring naturalists continued to follow Linnaeus's nostrum that diligent study would allow anyone to

233. Worster, *Nature's Economy*.; Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 96.

234. *Ibid.*, 31, 96-97.

participate in the grand project to identify Creation's underlying order. But now the craze for taxonomy became infused with the belief that study of the natural world allowed access to a Romantic idyll untainted by industrial civilization. As Donald Worster argues, the nineteenth century popularity of the nature essay, as practiced by authors such as Gilbert White, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, derived from "the search for a lost pastoral haven, for a home in an inhospitable and threatening world."<sup>235</sup>

Two figures are of particular interest to us here, both for their contributions to the study of albatrosses in particular and for their impact on attitudes to Nature more broadly. The first is John James Audubon (1785-1851), the most famous American ornithologist due to his monumental project of cataloguing and rendering every bird species found within the United States.<sup>236</sup> *Birds of America* was published in a series of un-captioned illustrated plates between 1827 and 1838, and accompanied by five volumes of Audubon's *Ornithological Biography*. The two works were based partly on Audubon's own field observations, but also on specimens sent back to him by travelers from the Oregon Trail, California and beyond. He put his name, for instance, to the new taxa *Diomedea nigripes* (Audubon, 1839), identified from a specimen shot by an acquaintance traveling from San Francisco to Honolulu.<sup>237</sup> By representing American avifauna as a coherent unified entity, Audubon's work constructed a

235. Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 16.

236. John James Audubon, *The Birds of America* (New York: Crescent).

237. John James Audubon and William MacGillivray, *Ornithological Biography or an Account of the Habits of the Birds of the United States of America ; Accompanied By Descriptions of the Objects Represented in the Work Entitled the Birds of America, and Interspersed With Delineations of American Scenery and Manners*. (Edinburgh: A. Black, 1970) vol.5, 327-328. *Diomedea nigripes* was not included within *Birds of America*, but only because the illustrated series had already ceased publishing by the time Audubon identified it. He nevertheless saw fit to include the new species within his *Ornithological Biography*, despite the fact that the specimen he received was killed en route to the Kingdom of Hawaii. (In fact the longitude given by Audubon, which is likely mistaken, suggests that the specimen was taken closer to the Bonin Islands than to Hawaii.) *Ibid*.

biological basis for the United States at a moment when its citizens were fanning out across, and seeking to assert sovereignty over, a broad swathe of the continent.<sup>238</sup> (See [Figure 2.6](#)) In this sense he helped to “naturalize the nation” in much the same manner as contemporary American authors such as Timothy Flint, James Fenimore Cooper and Henry David Thoreau.<sup>239</sup>

Not much about this romanticization of wilderness was uniquely American. Far from being exceptional, the cult of the frontier was merely one iteration of a broader Late Romanticist tendency to look to Nature as the font of the national spirit. Walter Scott located the source of Scottish culture in the rugged wilderness of the highlands and its clans.<sup>240</sup> German nationalists traced the roots of the Teutonic Volk back to the barbarians of the primeval Hercynian forest.<sup>241</sup> Due to the United States’ nakedly colonial origins, nationalist writers struggled to claim an identity rooted in autochthony. So instead they developed an idiosyncratic inversion on the theme, whereby national character was forged through dialectical engagement with the wilderness. Audubon was an enthusiastic participant in this cult: while touring Europe to promote his lavishly produced illustrations, he took care to play the role of the fur-clad frontier woodsman. And in his writings, he consciously honed his self-image as a true child of American Nature. *Ornithological Biography* begins thus:

238. Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*

239. Eric Kaufmann, “Naturalizing the Nation”: The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 4 (1998)

240. Hugh Trevor-Roper “The invention of tradition: the Highland tradition of Scotland” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

241. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Vintage, 1996-11-05), 100-102; Michael Import, “A Sylvan People: Wilhelmine Forestry and the Forest as a Symbol of Germanism” in Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller, *Germany’s Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History* (Rutgers University Press, 2005)

I received light and life in the New World. When I had hardly yet learned to walk, and to articulate those first words always endearing to parents, the productions of Nature that lay spread all around, were constantly pointed out to me. They soon became my playmates; and before my eyes were sufficiently formed to enable me to estimate the difference between the azure tints of the sky, and the emerald hue of the bright foliage, I felt that an intimacy with them, not consisting of friendship with them, but bordering on phrenzy, must accompany my steps through life...when removed from the woods, the prairies, and the brooks, or shut up from the view of the wide Atlantic, I experienced none of those pleasures most congenial to my mind.<sup>242</sup>

Audubon's self-presentation as a "native son" of America was selectively truthful at best.<sup>243</sup> John James was born Jean-Jaques, a French citizen in the Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue (now Haiti). The "New World" in which he received light and life was a slave plantation; the emerald-hued foliage of his childhood mostly sugar-cane. In 1791, upon the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, the family fled to the French metropole; in 1803, to avoid conscription into Napoleon's armies, Audubon sloughed off his French citizenship and travelled under forged papers to the United States.<sup>244</sup> In crafting an identity for himself as quintessential American by virtue of his intimate affinity with Nature, Audubon could excise these troubling early episodes. Nothing is as American as a fresh start.

In Audubon's life story we see how the trope of the frontier served to occlude not just the social history of landscape - in this case the centrality of slavery to the economy of the New World - but also the terms on which citizenship within the nation was negotiated. Like other appeals to the organic (or cultural) basis of the nation, the claim to native-ness relieved

242. Audubon and MacGillivray, *Ornithological Biography*. vol.1, v-vi.

243. *Ibid.* vol.5, xi.

244. Richard Rhodes, *John James Audubon : The Making of an American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 3. Later, Audubon would tell people he had been born in Louisiana, a fiction intended primarily to hide his birth outside wedlock, but which also had the advantage of rendering him a native-born son of the United States.

citizens of participation in what Renan called the “daily plebiscite”.<sup>245</sup> In this sense it subverted the republican tradition of imagining the national community as a civically constituted entity, membership of which entailed specific rights and obligations. Moreover the trope of the frontier, like all nationalist historical imaginaries, relied on a particular unilinear conception of historical time in which the territorial boundaries of the nation could only ever shift outwards. As conquest over Nature was predestined, territorial contraction was unthinkable.<sup>246</sup> Even Frederick Jackson Turner, who in 1893 would wax fearful for the future of American civilization after what he saw as the “closing of the frontier”, could only imagine stagnation at worst.<sup>247</sup>

Considering that Audubon’s name was later appropriated by a national network of bird conservation societies, it is worth saying something at this point of the man’s ecological consciousness. Like all ornithologists, Audubon was a keen hunter. Unlike later generations of birders, he did not feel compelled to rationalize his taking of life as necessary to the

245. Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” *Nation and Narration* 11 (1996)

246. It almost goes without saying that the frontiersman was understood to be Protestant European in ancestry; Native Americans were construed as a part of the wilderness and thus destined to be subjugated.

247. Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” ; William Cronon, “Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner,” *The Western History Association* 18, no. 2 (April 1987) As we shall see in [Chapter Three](#), the appearance of large numbers of Asian migrants on the Pacific seaboard threatened to disrupt this narrative altogether, triggering (white) American fears of a “clash of frontiers”. But all this lay in the future: for Audubon, the frontier was sparkled with unbridled optimism, a site of unlimited possibility for American expansion and for future ornithological discoveries. Concluding his *Birds of America* series, he exclaimed his belief “that many species remain to be added, by future observers, who shall traverse the vast wastes, extending northwards and westward from the Canadas, and along the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains, from Nootka to California. Nay, I look upon the whole range of these magnificent mountains, as yet unexplored, for the few scientific travellers who have traversed it, have merely, as it were, picked up the scattered objects that crossed their path.” Audubon and MacGillivray, *Ornithological Biography*.

scientific endeavor.<sup>248</sup> He once described his enjoyment at watching a farmer mutilate a family of trapped wolves; recalling a particularly fruitful session blasting away at Canada geese, he remarked with regret “Oh that we had more guns!”<sup>249</sup> The term “extinction” does not occur in *Ornithological Biography* once. Even Audubon’s occasional irritation that unsustainable hunting practices were destroying nesting sites was softened by a faith that the targeted birds would eventually relocate to safety elsewhere.<sup>250</sup>

In this attitude Audubon was hardly unusual: he belonged to an age that predated widespread awareness of what today is termed anthropogenic extinction. Until the late eighteenth century, even the possibility of extinction had been nigh on unthinkable. Taxonomists almost without exception subscribed to the doctrine of natural theology, that “the natural world was orderly, static and new. Most importantly, and one of the beliefs undergirding these convictions, they also firmly believed that it was the product of a divine mind.”<sup>251</sup>

248. Mark Barrow, *A Passion for Birds* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 38.

249. Jon T Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (Yale University Press, 2008), 1-2; Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 38.

250. Writing about “Eggers” he encountered on the Labrador coastline, Audubon complained that “These people gather all the eider down they can find; yet so inconsiderate are they, that they kill every bird that comes in their way...So constant and persevering are their depredations, that these species, which, according to the accounts of the few settlers I saw in the country, were exceedingly abundant twenty years ago, have abandoned their ancient breeding places, and removed much farther north in search of peaceful security... This war of extermination cannot last many years more. The Eggers themselves will be the first to repent the disappearance of the myriads of birds that made the coast of Labrador their summer residence, and unless they follow the persecuted tribes to the northward, they must renounce their trade.” Audubon and MacGillivray, *Ornithological Biography*. v.3, 85-86.

251. Mark Barrow, *Nature’s Ghosts: Confronting Extinction From the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19. European naturalists were familiar with at least one example of anthropogenic extinction: the Dodo bird that had once lived on the island of Mauritius. Ryan Jones shows that some European naturalists also suspected the extinction of Steller’s sea cow as early as the 1790s. But such instances were seen not as inklings of a universal rule but simply as bizarre oddities. Errol Fuller, *Dodo: From Extinction to Icon* (London: Collins, 2002); Jones, *Empire of Extinction.*; Henry M. Cowles, “A Victorian Extinction: Alfred Newton and the Evolution of Animal Protection,” *The British*

Even after Georges Cuvier (whom Audubon met in Paris) produced compelling evidence of prehistoric extinction in the fossil record, no consensus emerged that the process was avoidable or even undesirable.<sup>252</sup> Many writers portrayed extinction as the inevitable price of human progress. Victorian depictions of the Dodo, as popularized in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), tended to render it a fat, ungainly waddling bird, uniquely fitted for extermination.<sup>253</sup> (See [Figures 2.7 & 2.8](#)) Darwin himself never fully embraced the possibility of anthropogenic extinction, preferring to reassure his readers that species loss was simply part of the regular order of Nature.<sup>254</sup> Alfred Russell Wallace viewed the matter with distinctly ironical fatalism:

Should civilized man ever reach these distant lands, and bring moral, intellectual and physical light into the recesses of these virgin forests, we may be sure that he will so disturb the nicely balanced relations of organic and inorganic nature as to cause the disappearance, and finally the extinction, of these very beings whose wonderful structure and beauty he alone is fitted to appreciate and enjoy.<sup>255</sup>

One man more than any other would impart distinct moral valence to the notion of anthropogenic extinction, and in doing so establish biodiversity conservation as a field of political action. Alfred Newton was Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Cambridge University from 1866 until his death over fifty years later. As a young man in 1858, he had travelled to Iceland in search of the Great Auk, a flightless bird which was known to have once inhabited inaccessible rocky outcrops across the North Atlantic. After extensive hunting by sailors, however, Great Auk populations had undergone a dramatic

*Journal for the History of Science* (2013), 699 fn.15.

252. Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts*, 40-41. For the 1828 encounter between Audubon and Cuvier, see Rhodes, *Audubon*, 313-316. Audubon was not only familiar with the French naturalist's work, he named a species - "Cuvier's wren" - after him.

253. Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts*, 56; Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Macmillan, 1865).

254. Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts*, 71-72.

255. *Ibid.*, 47.

collapse, with the last confirmed sighting occurring during a notorious cull in the summer of 1844. Newton was unable to spot any Auks during his trip, but it did inspire him to pioneer the study of extinction as a process in itself, going on to study other a number of extinct taxa such as the Rodriguez solitaire, “Newton’s Parakeet” and, of course, the Dodo.<sup>256</sup>

An early and enthusiastic convert to Darwinism, but also a devout Anglican, Newton’s innovation was to insist, against the ambivalence of earlier naturalists, that human-caused extinction could be distinguished from natural extinction, and that the inevitability of the latter by no means legitimized the former. As Henry Cowles argues, this line of thinking had a number of implications. On the metaphysical plane, it chimed with a certain Victorian ethos of Christian stewardship. (“*All things wise and wonderful / The Lord God made them all...*”) If Darwinism threatened to demolish the partition between the human and animal worlds, Newton’s distinction between “natural” and “unnatural” extinction reinforced it.<sup>257</sup> Humans, Newton insisted, were a force that acted outside Nature, and thus had an obligation to steward it: “We can only govern Nature by obeying her, only by obeying her can we assist her.”<sup>258</sup>

Newton’s understanding of extinction also thrust the naturalist squarely into the arena of formulating animal protection policy - as his scientific expertise was necessary to determine which species could and should be pulled back from the brink. Newton himself gave expert testimony to the British Parliament during the passage of the 1869 Seabird Bill.<sup>259</sup>

256. Cowles, “A Victorian Extinction,” 698-702 Specimens of these vanished birds were procured from the Mascarene Isles in the Indian Ocean; conveniently for Newton, his brother happened to be the governor of Mauritius.

257. *Ibid.*, 705.

258. *Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1876, cited in *Ibid.*, 713.

259. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation.*, 58. Newton argued that birds served the interests of British agriculture by clearing grubs from farmers’ fields.

Later he threw himself wholeheartedly into the bird protection movement. He was a founding member of the Society for the Protection of Birds (established 1889), and an active participant in the Anti-Plumage League. Newton argued that the feather trade was not just economically imprudent but a sign of wickedness: the feathered woman “bears the murderer’s brand upon her forehead.”<sup>260</sup> But if this kind of moralistic language echoed that of older campaigning organizations such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (founded 1824), then Newton was at pains to insist that the locus of concern ought not be the suffering of the individual animal, but the species as a whole.<sup>261</sup>

In a sense this was peculiar, because on an intellectual level Newton’s understanding of Darwinian evolution was too subtle for him not to grasp its implications for the old Linnaean view of biodiversity. “One of the best tests of a biologist,” he wrote, “is his ability to talk or write of ‘Species’ without believing that the term is more than a convenient counter for the exchange of ideas.”<sup>262</sup> No longer could species be conceptualized as fixed, stable components of the Great Chain of Being; if speciation is conceived of as a *process*, then biological taxa represent at best momentary snapshots of such a process, and imperfect ones at that. But, famously conservative in both his politics and his habits, Newton nevertheless continued to devote considerable professional energy to the pursuit of new taxa. In this sense his scholarly attention to species classification dovetailed with his public campaign to species preservation. Or perhaps it simply testifies to the embedded-ness, by this point, of taxonomi-

260. *Ibid.*, 63.

261. Cowles, “A Victorian Extinction,” 707. As Cowles puts it, “[e]xtinction was, for Newton, far more serious than cruelty, and he worked hard to disengage the issue of extinction from that of cruelty.”

262. Alfred Newton, “Address to the Biological Section,” *Report of the Fifty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1887) cited in Cowles, “A Victorian Extinction,” 705.

cal production as a means for naturalists to acquire intellectual capital.

### **Ornithologists Flock to Laysan Island**

In 1887 Newton despatched his favorite student, Scott Wilson, on a collecting expedition to Hawaii. This seem to have inspired one of his other students, Walter Rothschild, to mount his own expedition to the islands. A scion of the banking dynasty, Rothschild cut the figure of a colorful eccentric within British high society, known for his habit of processing round the streets of London in a carriage pulled by zebras.<sup>263</sup> Ignoring his family's urging to take up a career in finance, he instead chose to distinguish himself as a naturalist, and poured his considerable resources into pursuing that end.<sup>264</sup>

In 1889 Rothschild abandoned his studies at Cambridge, and began competing with his former mentor to send proxies to the archipelago in a race to acquire specimens, publish, and therefore claim the credit for discovery. Rothschild does not seem to have secured his advisor's assent for launching his own, rival expedition, and as a result "the relationship between Newton and Rothschild soon soured...[and] Hawaiian ornithology in the last decade of the nineteenth century became a very competitive enterprise."<sup>265</sup> Both naturalists were keenly aware that the outlying islands of the archipelago were the most promising sources of unclassified biodiversity: their remoteness meant that they were likely both to harbor bird

263. NHM-T, "Biography of Walter Rothschild." accessed 29 January 2015, <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/tring/about-the-natural-history-museum-at-tring.html> Last accessed 29 January 2015.

264. NHM-T, "History." accessed 28 October 2014, <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/tring/about-the-natural-history-museum-at-tring.html>. Last accessed 28 October 2014. Over the course of his career Rothschild would accumulate a collection of some 4,000 mounted birds and mammals, 300,000 birds skins and 200,000 eggs.

265. Storrs L. Orson, "On the History and Importance of Rothschild's *Avifauna of Laysan*." accessed 28 October 2014, [http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/nhrarebooks/rothschild/essays/storrs\\_rothschild.htm](http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/nhrarebooks/rothschild/essays/storrs_rothschild.htm) Last accessed 28 October 2014.

populations insulated from competition with invasive species and to remain unknown to previous taxonomists. In Honolulu Wilson was able to purchase a consignment of captive birds from the Northwest Islands, but his plans to visit the islands himself were frustrated. Later, he would write that “The loss of the season of 1891 was unfortunate for the credit of the Joint Committee [of the Royal Society of London and the British Association for the Advancement of Science]; for many discoveries which its collector, had one been sent out in that year, could not have failed making fell to the lot of the persons employed by Mr. Rothschild in 1890-92...”<sup>266</sup>

Rothschild triumphed came when the collector in his employ, one Henry Palmer, was able to arrange passage to Laysan aboard a guano ship. This was a landmark moment in the history of research into albatrosses, which had previously only been studied via the examination of dead specimens or shipboard observation. Palmer, however, was able to visit the birds’ breeding grounds, observe them firsthand, and acquire a comprehensive collection of specimens and field-notes which he sent back to his employer in London.<sup>267</sup> Rothschild then wrote them up as hastily as possible in order to beat Newton to publication. They would go on to form the core of Rothschild’s ornithological opus, published in 1893 as *The Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighboring Islands*.<sup>268</sup> Of the many new taxa which Rothschild was able to claim discovery of in this way, the most relevant for our purposes is *Diomedea immutabilis*

266. Scott Barchard Wilson and Arthur Humble Evans, *Aves Hawaiienses: The Birds of the Sandwich Islands* (London: R.H. Porter, 1890) cited in Orson, “On the History and Importance of Rothschild’s *Avifauna of Laysan*.”

267. Charles A. Ely and Roger B. Clapp, “The Natural History of Laysan Island, Northwest Hawaiian Islands,” *Atoll Research Bulletin* 171(1973), 254; Scott Barchard Wilson, “On a New Finch From Midway Island, North Pacific,” *Ibis* 32, no. 3 (1890), 339-341.

268. Lionel Walter Rothschild Rothschild, *The Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighbouring Islands: With a Complete History to Date of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions* (R.H. Porter, 1893)

(Rothschild, 1893) which Rothschild established as a species distinct from the one Steller had discovered in Kamchatka. The distinction could only have been made through close observation of the birds in their nesting habitat: Palmer in his field-notes discerned that, unlike Steller's Albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*), the feathers of "Rothschild's" albatross did not change color over the course of their lifecycle.

But how was it that Palmer, Rothschild's proxy, was able to gain access to the birds of Laysan at this particular moment in history? The timing of the discovery of Laysan's avian biodiversity was by no means coincidental. To answer this question, we first must backtrack somewhat to discuss the history of Laysan Island and of the Hawaiian archipelago up to this point.

### **The Early History of Laysan**

It is possible that Polynesians of the pre-Contact period knew about Laysan, and perhaps even laid claim to it. But if they did, little in the way of written or archaeological evidence remains to prove it.<sup>269</sup> The island first enters the historical record in the early 19th century, when it became known as a resupply point for whalers and trading vessels transporting furs from the Pacific Northwest to China.<sup>270</sup> Laysan was useful to these expeditions not only for its

269. *Native Hawaiian Claims to the Lands and Natural Resources of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands* (Report to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, February 2003), 17. At the time of Captain Cook's arrival, of all the uninhabited islands west of Kauai only Nihoa and Necker remained a part of native Hawaiians' oral history. Nihoa had been settled in the pre-Contact era but then abandoned; Necker, suggests Cleghorn, "was not permanently inhabited but visited for short term stays related to religious ritual linked to the harvesting of birds and bird eggs on the island". Paul L. Cleghorn, "The Settlement and Abandonment of Two Hawaiian Outposts: Nihoa and Necker Islands," *Occasional Papers of the Bernice Pauhi Bishop Museum* (1988), 47.

270. Alexander G. Findlay, *A Directory for the Navigation of the North Pacific Ocean With Descriptions of Its Coasts, Islands, Etc., From Panama to Behring Strait and Japan: Its Winds, Currents and Passages* (London: R.H. Laurie, 1886), 1113.

abundance of easily harvestable birds and eggs, but because at the center of the island was a lagoon with brackish freshwater of sometimes drinkable quality.<sup>271</sup> Though one of these vessels attached its name to the island (the name, “Moller”, evidently did not stick), the first recorded attempt to assert sovereignty over it dates to 1857, when Captain John Paty of the schooner *Manuokawai* landed on Laysan and claimed it for the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Paty had been exploring the Northwest Islands under the orders of the Hawaiian king, Alexander Liholiho, Kamehameha IV. His expedition was part of the king’s Doctrine of Discovery, intended to expand Hawaiian sovereignty over hitherto unknown (or forgotten) islands in the archipelago at a time when British and American merchants were scouring the Pacific in search of promising guano deposits to claim. On his return to Honolulu, Paty published the following description of Laysan in the Hawaiian government-owned newspaper

*The Polynesian*:

Laysan Island—W. by N.  $\frac{3}{4}$  N. from Honolulu 808 miles. This is a low sand island, 25 to 30 feet high; 3 miles long and 1-1/2 broad. The surface is covered with beach grass, and half a dozen small palm trees were seen. It has a lagoon in the centre (salt) 1 mile long and half a mile wide, of salt water and not a hundred yards from the lagoon, an abundance of tolerable good fresh water can be had by digging two feet, and near the lagoon was found a deposit of guano. The island is “literally covered” with birds; there is, at low estimate 800,000. Seal and turtle were numerous on the beach, and might be easily taken. They were evidently unaccustomed to the sight of man, as they scarcely move at our approach, and the birds are so tame and plentiful, that it

271. This lagoon accounts for the presence of land birds on Laysan, though accounts vary as to whether it was considered potable for humans. Ely and Clapp maintain that “Laysan has had no permanent freshwater supply since at least the late 19th century...Either the tastes of the individuals involved were different or potable freshwater was no longer present in quantity by 1896. See John Paty, “Account of the Manuokawai - Interesting Account of Her Explorations,” *The Polynesian* 6 June 1857; Rothschild, *The Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighbouring Islands: With a Complete History to Date of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions.*; Schauinsland and (trans.), “Three Months on a Coral Island (Laysan),” 72; Ely and Clapp, “The Natural History of Laysan Island, Northwest Hawaiian Islands,” 9.

was difficult to walk about the island without stepping upon them. The gulls lay enormous large eggs, of which I have a specimen. A bank of rocks and sand extends off to the South and West 6 to 8 miles or more. Good anchorage can be found on the West side of the island in from 4 to 20 fathoms, by selecting a sandy spot to anchor upon, half to 2 miles from the beach. The best landing is about one-third of the distance from the Northern to the Southern point of the island, where there is a very smooth sand beach.<sup>272</sup>

The timing of Hawaii's claim over Laysan makes it seem likely that the search for guano was the primary motivating factor. Just the year before, as we saw in [Chapter One](#), the United States Congress had formalized the procedure by which American citizens could assert sovereignty over uninhabited guano islands. Then again other motives are also possible. As well as its guano deposits, Laysan had an abundant supply of bird feathers, which were valued as ritual ornaments by the Hawaiian court in much the same manner as they would be by the fashionistas of Paris, London and New York.<sup>273</sup> It also had possible strategic value as a way-station catering to the burgeoning trans-Pacific trade. But whatever plans Paty or the King of Hawaii may have had in mind for Laysan failed to materialize within the medium-term. No attempt was made to settle the island, even though other, less remote islands such as

272. Paty, "Account of the Manuokawai - Interesting Account of Her Explorations."

273. Richard Ellis, *No Turning Back: The Life and Death of Animal Species* (Harper Perennial, 2005), 157; Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire*, 74-76. Thomas describes how feathers "were highly valued across the Pacific. Never more than mere decorations, in much of Polynesia they were closely connected with divinity, sacredness and divine genealogies...In Hawaii, featherwork of all sorts was elaborated to a greater extent than anywhere else. Most strikingly, when kings went into battle, and on other occasions of ritual risk, they wore magnificent cloaks, woven of a mass of bright but tiny feathers into something like a variegated velvet...What is most telling about these cloaks is the sheer labour behind their production...Nowhere in Oceania, apart from here in Hawaii, could chiefly men and women, even of the very highest status, mobilize the labour of common people and appropriate their products to anything like this extent. Relative to the gifts received by a Keatonui or even a Pomare, the cloaks suggest a system of corvee labour, on something nearer a Mayan or Egyptian scale." For a description of the global feather trade see [Chapter One](#).

Baker and Palmyra were worked as guano mines between the 1850s and 1870s.<sup>274</sup> As late as 1886, a gazetteer of the North Pacific assessed Laysan as follows: “There is a very small deposit of guano on the island, but not of sufficient quantity to warrant any attempts to get it.”<sup>275</sup> And as we saw in the previous chapter, as long as such islands remained uninhabited, nominal assertions of sovereignty over them could only count for so much.

### **Asian Indentured Labor and the Growth of Hawaii's Plantation Economy**

If trans-Pacific commodity flows were beginning to lap against the shores of Laysan Island, then the Kingdom of Hawaii was already thoroughly engulfed in them. Since the 1790s sealers had been in the habit of stopping-off in Honolulu en route to sell furs at Canton. King Kamehameha I (1756-1819), the unifier of the archipelago, had managed to take advantage of Hawaii’s position on this trade route by monopolizing sandalwood exports from the islands, which were in high demand in China.<sup>276</sup> But as Honolulu became established as a trans-Pacific port, Hawaii’s native population dwindled - ravaged by diseases such as syphilis, scabies and tuberculosis introduced by sailors. The first ever Hawaiian census was conducted in 1831-2, and recorded a population of 130,000; by 1878 this number had shrunk to 44,000.<sup>277</sup> Apart from the staggering human toll it exacted, the high mortality rate also

274. Duffy Burnett, “The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands.”; Gregory Rosenthal, “Life and Labor in a Seabird Colony: Hawaiian Guano Workers, 1857-70,” *Environmental History* 17(2012)

275. Findlay, *Navigation of the North Pacific*, 1113.

276. In China sandalwood was used in medicine, funerary incense and fine carving. Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood; a Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific, 1830-1865* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967); Nicholas Thomas, “The Age of Empire in the Pacific” in Armitage and Bashford, *Pacific Histories*, 81-82.

277. Hawaiian demography at the time of Contact is hotly disputed. Bushnell estimates that Hawaii’s population at the time of Captain Cook’s visit was 300,000, but Stannard estimates it may have been as high as one million. See O. A. Bushnell, *The Gifts of Civilization: Germs*

destabilized Hawaiian court politics, as reigning monarchs were frequently struck down in their prime.<sup>278</sup>

Hawaiian history, though, is more than a simple story of ecological imperialism, of pathogen-wielding whites overwhelming indigenous resisters. It is more useful to think of Hawaii during this period as a borderland, where multiple legal jurisdictions overlapped, and where natives and immigrants mingled to forge a distinctive “middle ground” society. The Kingdom of Hawaii in the nineteenth century was in some ways remarkably successful at carving out a qualified sovereignty within the new international system. By acquiring the accoutrements of civilization, from Christianity to woolen frock coats, the Kamehameha dynasty was able to secure diplomatic recognition from European foreign ministries, including an 1843 pledge from Britain and France never to take formal colonial possession.<sup>279</sup> These same governments however, did not consent for their subjects to be tried in Hawaiian courts of law, preferring instead to extend their own maritime legal codes to cover the terrestrial Pacific as well.<sup>280</sup> These measures paralleled European diplomacy in East Asia, not simply because of the insistence on extraterritoriality, but in that the insistence tended to be

*and Genocide in Hawai'i* (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 266-269; David E. Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawaii on the Eve of Western Contact* (University of Hawaii Press, 1989)

278. For instance, Kamehameha II died from a bout of measles contracted during a state visit to Great Britain; King Lunalilo died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-nine. Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 18, 51-53.

279. This pledge was given, however, shortly after a rogue naval commander did briefly annex Hawaii to Britain. Kerry R. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History From First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 170; Poka Laenui “The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy” in Donald Denoon and Malama Meleisea, *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 232-7; Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People From Australia to Alaska* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 151.

280. Lisa Ford, “Law” in Armitage and Bashford, *Pacific Histories*, 223.

expressed down the barrel of whatever gunboat happened to be in port at the time.<sup>281</sup> This state of affairs provided ample opportunities for foreign governments to intervene in Hawaiian court politics, eventually culminating in American annexation.<sup>282</sup>

Annexation did not appear inevitable, however. Not all American residents in Hawaii agitated for annexation; on the contrary, many became Hawaiian subjects and government advisors. Others sought private profit within the ambit of the Hawaiian polity: the rapid growth of Hawaii's sugar economy in the latter half of the nineteenth century testifies to the extent of collaboration between the newcomers and what Banner calls "the Hawaiian indigenous governing class".<sup>283</sup> White settlers began receiving land grants from Hawaiian monarchs from the first decade of the nineteenth century, often in exchange for services rendered; with such grants the Kamehameha dynasty was likely to have been "assimilating white visitors into the traditional hierarchy of [Hawaiian] land tenure."<sup>284</sup> Then in mid-century the Māhele reforms (1846-50) instituted formal property rights on an Anglo-American model, allowing foreigners to purchase and own land. This new arrangement combined Hawaiian sovereignty with white capital and aspects of the American legal system to replace the depleted sandalwood groves with cane-fields, essentially turning Hawaii into one large sugar plantation. After a volatile start, Hawaiian exports to the U.S. revived during the American Civil War, when Union blockades cut the South off from Northern sugar markets. They climbed even more rapidly after the signing of a bilateral free trade treaty in

281. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford Studies in International History).

282. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall*, 173-175.

283. Banner, *Possessing the Pacific*, 129-130.

284. *Ibid.*; Denoon and Meleisea, *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, 134.

1875.<sup>285</sup> By the end of the century, Hawaii would export over a quarter of a million tons of sugar per year, far outstripping any other commodity.<sup>286</sup> (See [Figures 2.9](#) & [2.10](#))

To cultivate their rapidly expanding acreage, planters initially relied on indentured laborers contracted from Southeast China - the same workforce that had supplied cheap labor in California since the Gold Rush.<sup>287</sup> But as in the U.S., the rapid increase in Chinese immigration after 1876 eventually provoked a backlash. Some Chinese laborers, rather than return home after having worked their contracts, remained in Hawaii where they were seen as competing with the “workingman” in both the labor market and various petty-entrepreneurial activities.<sup>288</sup> In 1884, two years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in the U.S., the Hawaiian consulate in Hong Kong stopped issuing travel documents, and convinced the British authorities there to do the same.<sup>289</sup> This prohibition on Chinese migration constituted the first attempt to curb the flow of people across Hawaii’s territorial borders (with the exception of maritime quarantine measures).

No longer able to source labor from the Qing Empire, Hawaiian planters instead turned to the next most promising source of cheap migrant laborer: Japan. -But this time the Hawaiian government, having learned from its experience with Chinese coolies, was

285. Ronald T. Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 18-19; Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 32; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967) 83.

286. Most native Hawaiians received little benefit from any of this, having been dispossessed of their land by the 1850s. Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire*, 243. Banner argues that Hawaiian elites’ decision to implement the Māhele may have been motivated by fear of imminent annexation. If Hawaii was to be colonized, holding title to land in a format recognized by the colonizer would help to reduce the risk of expropriation. Stuart Banner, “Preparing to be Colonized: Land Tenure and Legal Strategy in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii,” *Law & Society Review* 39, no. 2 (2005)

287. Takaki, *Pau Hana*.; Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 40.

288. “Chinese Immigration” *Saturday Press*, 29 November 1884.

289. Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 41.

determined to devise a more controlled migrant labor regime. In 1886 the two countries negotiated a Convention whereby laborers would be indentured in Japan for fixed-term contracts, and then shipped via Yokohama to Hawaii, where their status in the kingdom would be monitored by the Hawaiian Board of Immigration. Only male laborers would be recruited - and unlike the previous wave of Chinese migrants, they would be given no chance to bring their wives or family with them, or to send for them once they arrived in Hawaii. When their term of contract expired, they were to return to Japan immediately.<sup>290</sup>

The Convention was advantageous for both sides. The Japanese government was able to secure foreign exchange in the form of remittances sent back by laborers, whilst also maintaining a degree of control over the emigration process so as to avoid causing national embarrassment. Moreover it is possible that the ministers who brokered the arrangement may have profited personally from it, or at least used it to disburse patronage. Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru had close ties to Mitsui Trading, whose shipping line transported the majority of the first wave of emigrants to Hawaii.<sup>291</sup> The laborers themselves hailed overwhelmingly from Inoue's former domain of Chōshū - although it is also true that the region already had a strong tradition of migrant labor, so was a somewhat logical choice of recruitment locale.<sup>292</sup>

What the Hawaiian government got was raw manpower. In this respect was the system was a great success. As Hawaii's sugar economy flourished, the number of Japanese migrant workers increased steadily, until they comprised the largest ethnic group in the archipelago.<sup>293</sup> The 1886 Convention seemed to have been perfectly designed to augment the

290. *Ibid.*, 44.

291. *Ibid.*, 37.

292. Alan Takeo Moriyama, *Imingaiasha: Japanese Emigration Companies and Hawaii, 1894-1908* (University of Hawaii Press, 1985-10), 14-16.

293. The census of 1900 counted 61,111 Japanese on the islands, comprising over one third

pact struck forty years earlier between the Hawaiian state and white capital. The revised Hawaiian constitution, promulgated the following year, reinforced this point when it explicitly limited citizenship to Hawaiians and whites only, thereby demarcating a clear divide between residents of the islands. There would be a citizen class, possessing the right to permanent abode and political participation, and another guest worker class with no political rights to speak of and whose residence would be of strictly limited duration.

But as William Morgan shows, the 1886 Convention contained the potential for instability, in that it gave Japan the right to approve the appointment of the head of the Hawaiian Immigration Board, and thus the potential to have considerable sway over Hawaiian immigration policy. Over the next decade the Immigration Board gradually delegated control of labor flows to a handful of private companies run by Japanese agents, and migration consequently became much less tightly controlled than the spirit of the Convention had intended. Morgan calls Article III “an amazing infringement of Hawai’i’s right to appoint its own officials” - and it is true that, in return for a steady supply of indentured labor, Hawaii had effectively ceded a portion of sovereign control over its own borders.<sup>294</sup> The consequences of this became clear in the years between the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy (1893) and U.S. Annexation (1898), when the pro-Annexationist government of the new Republic of Hawaii tried to impose limits on Japanese migration. The

of Hawaii’s entire population. In comparison, the census counted 37,656 Hawaiians (of whom 29,799 were “full” Hawaiians), 25,767 Chinese and 28,819 Whites. United States Census Bureau, ["Hawaii - Race and Hispanic Origin: 1900 to 1990"](#) Internet Release Date: 13 July 2005. Last accessed 1 July 2015.

294. Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 41-44. Alternatively, Hawaiian foreign policy during this period could be understood as attempting to negotiate from a position of weakness by balancing various external powers against each other. For example, in 1881 King Kalākua visited Japan and tried to arrange a royal marriage between his niece and the Meiji Emperor.

Japanese Foreign Minister, Ōkuma Shigenobu, insisted on his nation's pre-established treaty rights, prompting the Hawaiian government to look for American support in the event of a showdown with Japan.

Events reached a climax in 1897, when the Hawaiian Foreign Ministry rejected entry to 163 immigrants aboard the *Sakura Maru*. In retaliation, Ōkuma dispatched a warship to Honolulu “to exhibit our power and protect 26,000 Japanese, almost one quarter of the population of Hawaii.”<sup>295</sup> Ōkuma's vigorous assertion of Japanese rights in Hawaii stemmed not just from humane concern for his fellow citizens, but from a concern to protect his nation's diplomatic standing. The Japanese foreign ministry was still in the midst of repealing the Unequal Treaties that had been foisted upon it by European powers in the 1850s.<sup>296</sup> If Japan was to be seen as fit for inclusion in the “family of [civilised] nations”, it was of paramount importance that its citizens not be subject to the same humiliating restrictions that had been imposed on Chinese emigrants in 1884.<sup>297</sup>

### **Birdshit and Bloodshed on Laysan, 1890-1900**

As well as encouraging planters to import large numbers of indentured laborers to Hawaii, the sugar boom triggered a search for new sources of commercial fertilizer.<sup>298</sup> Cane planta-

295. Shimamura to Ōkuma, 18 March 1897; 7 April 1897 in Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō monjo Meiji* (Tokyo: Nihon Kokusai Rengō Kyōkai, 1954), 674-676 cited in Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 50 .

296 The groundwork for treaty revision had been substantially completed by Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu in 1894, but extraterritoriality was not abolished until 1899. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan (Oxford Studies in International History)*. Kindle location 3516.

297 McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*, 132.

298. The first recorded use of commercial fertilizer was on a Hawaiian sugar plantation dates

tions required intensive injections of soil nutrients in order to maintain high yields, and prospectors soon turned to the as yet unexploited guano islands of the North Pacific. In 1890 an Englishman named Freeth sailed to Laysan and hoisted the Hawaiian flag there - quite possibly for the first time in over thirty years. Leaving two men on the island to hold possession of it, he then returned to Honolulu, upon which he negotiated to lease the island from the Hawaiian government for twenty years, for the nominal sum of five dollars per annum. Hackfeld & Co, a German planters' firm based in Kauai, agreed to provide majority financing for a new venture, the Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Company<sup>299</sup>, which would open a guano mine on Laysan.

The PGFC promptly appointed Freeth as “governor” of Laysan, to reside there and supervise a workforce of laborers from the Gilbert Islands<sup>300</sup> in excavating and loading guano for transshipment to Honolulu.<sup>301</sup> Initially the operation of the mine was a disaster. Laysan’s treacherous reefs, combined with stormy weather, hampered shipping operations, and Freeth proved an inept manager. Within eighteen months of the first shipment arriving in Honolulu, the company had managed to sell \$50,850 worth of guano at a total operating cost of almost \$90,000. The board replaced Freeth with another shareholder, Captain Spencer, who chose to replace the Gilbert Islanders with Japanese laborers. (See [Figure 2.11](#)) The Laysan operation

to 1879, but in the next twenty years its use became increasingly common. In 1885 \$30,568.92 worth of fertilizer and fertilizer material was imported into the country; by 1890 this figure had increased to \$154,635.65; by 1897 to \$579,379.62. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 70.

299. The company was initially named the North Pacific Phosphate and Fertilizer Company, and was renamed in 1895. See HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co.

300. In 1892 the Gilbert Islands became a protectorate of the British Empire; today they are known as the Republic of Kiribati in Micronesia.

301. HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co.; Tom Unger, *Max Schlemmer, Hawaii’s King of Laysan Island* (iUniverse, Inc., 2004-02-08) Ch.4.

eventually turned its first profit in 1896, and continued operating in the black (albeit with slim margins) for the next four years. (See [Figure 2.12](#)) And Spencer, as manager of the guano mine, became known to the Hawaiian press not merely as “governor” but as the “King of Laysan”.<sup>302</sup>

The moniker was only half in jest. For in 1900, a challenge to Spencer’s authority over the island ended in violence, resulting in the deaths of two Japanese and the guano mine’s operations grinding to a halt. “LAYSAN ISLAND’S STORY OF BLOOD,” screamed *The Hawaiian Gazette*:

War has been declared, waged and ended on Laysan Island...The forty Japanese rose in a body, determined to annihilate all the white people on the Island and run things to suit themselves. Captain Spencer, over seventy years of age, took warning in time. Bidding his wife to remain in safety of their house, the brave old man called his son and Captain Spiller...around him and together they went out there to talk to the mob which had gathered between the white men’s house and the Japanese quarters.

Captain Spencer wanted to know what the trouble was, why it was that the Japanese were dissatisfied and why they gathered thus threateningly.

The leaders of the mob answered defiantly, cursing the aging captain and his friends and shouting something to the effect that they were American citizens and wouldn’t work any more on the Island but would behave thereafter as best suited themselves. They threatened the white men’s lives. They were carrying flags and waving them excitedly and were armed with knives, clubs stones and cutlasses made of hoop-iron sharpened.

#### DEFENDING THEIR LIVES

They made a movement towards the platform on which Captain Spencer and his friends stood. The white men whipped out their revolvers. Old Captain Spencer headed the white men. He raised a six-shooter in either hand.

302. “The King of Laysan: His Majesty here for a short stay” *The Hawaiian Star*, 12 July 1900.

“The first man upon this platform shall die!” shouted Captain Spencer.

“Shoot away!” cried the mob and at a signal from the leader, charged all together for the platform. Though they moved quickly, Captain Spencer’s trigger fingers moved quicker. Eight times his revolvers spoke and they spoke to the point. Pistols in hands of the other white men also had something to say.

#### TWO ARE KILLED

Two of the Japanese dropped dead. They were the foremost in the charge and were the leaders of the rebellion. Three others fell helpless, sorely wounded...This business-like handling of the fire-arms awed the Japanese, and after that it was not such a difficult matter to round them up and put them all aboard the bark where Captain Willer took charge of them, thirty-eight in all, and put them below between decks and put them under guard.<sup>303</sup>

On the boat’s return from Laysan, Spencer was arraigned for trial at the Honolulu District Court. At the pre-trial hearing, two guano miners disputed this lurid account. They denied being armed during the confrontation, and testified that the dispute had begun when laborers’ representatives complained to Spencer that “the guano dust, blown by the fresh sea breeze, got into the eyes of the laborers and greatly bothered them.” The representatives requested an alternative work schedule; when Spencer refused, they then requested higher wages as compensation for their discomfort. This request was also refused, and the next day the miners downed tools in protest. The shootings occurred that evening, after a confrontation in which Spencer refused to sell rice to the miners unless they resumed work.<sup>304</sup> Based on this testimony the sheriff - though “expressing regret that it had been necessary to bring the charge” - sought manslaughter on the basis that Spencer had “attempted to starve the men into submission... it would have been inhuman to cut off food, even if they did refuse to work, being on a barren island as they were.”

303. “Laysan Island’s Story of Blood” *The Hawaiian Gazette*, 11 September 1900.

304. “White Men All Fired, Say Laysan Island Japs” *Hawaiian Star*, 14 September 1900.

The defense counsel, however, argued that Spencer justifiably feared for his life, for “when a man goes up against a loaded revolver he is out for blood.”<sup>305</sup> He claimed that the Japanese had engaged in threatening behavior, such as wrestling on the beach, banging drums and raising a the national flag of Japan above their house. The Japanese responded that this was all simply customary behavior to celebrate the Festival of the Dead, which fell on that day.<sup>306</sup> But the magistrate decided after only an hour of argument that:

it would be be impossible to find a jury that would convict the captain of any crime in connection with the Laysan island shooting, and therefore discharged the age sea-captain...When this announcement was made there was great applause in the lobby... The Japanese about looked glum and sullen and declared themselves outraged and that justice had been miscarried.<sup>307</sup>

As the newspaper coverage hints, the Laysan Island “riot” was but the most violent iteration in an abrupt recalibration of Hawaii’s labor relations at the turn of the century. In 1898, as part of the sudden irruption empire of American Empire into the Pacific triggered by war with Spain, Congress passed the Newlands Resolution to formally annex Hawaii. Two years later the terms of American rule over the new colony were made explicit in the Hawaiian Organic Act. The Act did not, as the Laysan laborers may have claimed, transform the Japanese population of Hawaii into American citizens. But it did grant them a raft of new rights that substantially strengthened their negotiating power against both their employers and the state.

Most simply the Act, by abolishing indentured servitude, allowed migrant laborers to

305. “Captain Spencer is Promptly Dismissed: Laysan Island Case Thrown Out of Court” *Honolulu Republican*, 22 September 1900.

306. “White Men All Fired, Say Laysan Island Japs.”

307. “Shooting Was Justified” *The Hawaiian Star*, 22 September 1900.

walk away from their jobs without risk of being deported. Not only could sugarcane cutters now compare wages and working conditions on different plantations, they could even leave Hawaii altogether in favor of on-migration to the continental United States. (As we shall see in [Chapter Three](#), this was an opportunity which many workers availed themselves of). The Organic Act also legalized labor unions, an invitation which cane-cutters responded to with vigor. On 14 June, the day the Act passed, Japanese laborers marched through downtown Honolulu, chanting “We are free people!”<sup>308</sup> Throughout the summer of 1900, Japanese workers staged strikes and work stoppages at plantations across Hawaii, calling for shorter working hours, increased wages, and more Japanese promoted to positions as overseers in the cane-fields.<sup>309</sup> When the guano miners on Laysan declared, as the *Gazette* alleged, “something to the effect that they were American citizens and wouldn’t work any more on the Island but would behave thereafter as best suited themselves”, it was the Organic Act that they were understood to be referring to. For Hawaii’s white community, reportage of the unruly Japanese “mob” on Laysan therefore served as a synecdoche for race relations in the archipelago more generally.<sup>310</sup>

308. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 148-149.

309. An American economist surveying the Hawaiian labor market noted that “Of the 22 strikes recorded by the United States labor commissioner for 1900, 20 were undertaken by plantation laborers, all of them Japanese. The causes given throw a good deal of light on the aspirations of the inscrutable Jap: 'for discharge of overseer'; 'for increase of wages, increase of water-supply at dwellings, payment of damages for injuries received by an employee, and against retention of part of wages withheld in accordance with original contracts'; 'against being compelled to work regular hours'; 'for increase of wages from \$17.50 to \$26' per month'; 'for reinstatement of discharged employee'; 'for employment of Japanese instead of white overseer'; 'against the task system'; 'against being compelled to work on holidays'. This sudden advent of full-blown trade unionism took the planters by surprise.” Katharine Coman, *The History of Contract Labor in the Hawaiian Islands* (Macmillan, 1903), 47-8.

310. “Laysan Island’s Story of Blood.”

## "A True Bird Paradise": Producing Laysan's State of Nature

This, then, was the social space within which the first ornithologists conducted their field-work on Laysan. Japanese laborers mined the island for its guano, which was then shipped to Honolulu for sale to German or American planters, who hired yet more Japanese laborers to plough it into the soil of Kauai or Oahu, to grow sugarcane for export to global markets.

Labor relations on the island, and in Hawaii more generally, were not only fractious but were tightly interlinked with the global economic and diplomatic shifts that roiled Hawaiian politics in the 1890s. Yet the representations of Laysan produced by visitors worked to obscure these tensions, by eliding the human presence on the island wherever possible.

This tendency became more pronounced with time. The earliest ornithologists to visit Laysan did not shrink entirely from acknowledging that Laysan was an operational mining colony integrated into a global capitalist economy. Palmer, Rothschild's proxy, only managed to reach Laysan by booking passage aboard one of Hackfeld & Co.'s guano boats (the fare for which took up the lion's share of his expedition's expenses). Rothschild too included in his *Avifauna of Laysan* sketches of guano laborers manhandling the albatrosses, as well as several photos of the mining equipment, including a cart fully laden with eggs.<sup>311</sup> (See [Figures 2.13](#) & [2.14](#)) The text notes uneasily that "Mr Freeth protected most vigorously the birds on

311. Theories abound as to what these eggs were used for. According to Rothschild, they were used as food for the guano workers. But they may at some point have been gathered on a commercial scale. The PGFC accounts for the Laysan operation for the period 1890-1895 mention an income of forty-five dollars from "egg preserving". Carl Safina claims that the whites of the eggs were used to process photographic prints. Max Schlemmer for his part (see [Chapter Three](#)) would later insist to visiting ornithologists that "those eggs were gathered together by a photographer with nothing better to do, for the purpose of a spectacular picture". HSA PGFC M-476; Carl Safina, *Eye of the Albatross: Visions of Hope and Survival* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 147; Walter K. Fisher, "Birds of Laysan and the Leeward Islands, Hawaiian Group," *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission* XIII Part. III(1903), 789.

his island; but the photograph representing the train laden with Albatross-eggs shows how they were treated after he had left Laysan.”<sup>312</sup> Here then was a tacit admission that the existence of the guano mine might, at least indirectly, be impacting on the island’s ecology.

But as Laysan’s fame spread among ornithologists, however, subsequent accounts of the island began to elide the existence of the guano mine altogether. The process began with the German traveller Hugo von Schauinsland, who in his 1899 travelogue compared Laysan to Rousseau’s *State of Nature*. For all Schauinsland’s determination to force his experience on Laysan into a Romanticist framework, his text pulsates with contradictions. Schauinsland insisted that he and his wife felt that on Laysan “we are back in our true home”. But elsewhere, he described it was a “godforsaken island.”<sup>313</sup> At one point, he wrote with revulsion of being assailed by the island’s insect hordes:

I’ll not lament about the incessantly buzzing fly swarms, nor of the inch-long cockroaches, which not only ate our candles and bookbinding covers while we slept, but also our very own fingernails. Instead I’ll complain about an insect (*Dermestes domesticus Fb.*), which perhaps does not occur anywhere else in the world in such multitudes but which housewives find once in a while in their pantries, a small blackish-brown beetle: the carpet beetle.<sup>314</sup>

These horrific beetles, Schauinsland rationalized, were probably not endemic to the island but had been introduced by human agency:

Castaways probably introduced the first ones to the island. Since they have an unending food supply here in form of bird carcasses, and a lack of any population of insect-eating birds to keep them in check. their numbers have increased into the billions.<sup>315</sup>

312. Rothschild, *The Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighbouring Islands: With a Complete History to Date of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions*, 58.

313. Schauinsland and (trans.), “Three Months on a Coral Island (Laysan),” 8, 29.

314. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

315. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

Nevertheless, he and his wife were greatly relieved to leave Laysan at the end of their stint there. Mankind's true home it may have been, a place that "every friend of nature would find unexpected enjoyment in", but "[t]ruly, it is a hard beauty, that surrounds us here!"<sup>316</sup>

Like Palmer, Schauinsland conceded that it was the guano mine that afforded him access to Laysan:

the sole connection with that island is through the Guano Company... The ships of that company, which are for the most part also in German hands, travel two or three times each summer to the island. We not only had permission to visit the island, but we considered ourselves the company's guests during the whole time., for which we are forever very obliged.<sup>317</sup>

Beyond this, *Three Months on a Coral Island* omits virtually all mention of the guano mine, preferring to portray the Schauinslands as living a Crusoe-like existence in "solitude" amidst Laysan's State of Nature. The mine's laborers feature in the narrative only insofar as they illuminate the behavior of the island's bird population:

Once, a frigate bird making a quick sweep through the air, stole a cap from the head of a Japanese worker, carrying it high into the sky before dropping it. The bird repeated this scenario for several days thereafter... On another occasion a Japanese, rushing home from egg collecting with two full baskets in his hands and daydreaming about his forthcoming feast, was struck from out of the blue in the neck with such force, by a low flying albatross, that he fell forward into the basket of eggs.<sup>318</sup>

The American annexation of Hawaii hastened the erasure of Laysan's human inhabitants. The cult of wilderness was reaching its zenith in the United States at the time. As

316. *Ibid.*, 32.

317. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

318. *Ibid.*, 18-19. As part of his analysis of Laysan's geology, Schauinsland also mentions in passing that "the guano pits" extend to depths "way below sea level", 13.

Karl Jacoby writes, “American [national] parks...in the closing decades of the nineteenth century underwent an abrupt transformation from obscure locales to popular tourist destinations”.<sup>319</sup> During the same period Audubon societies dedicated to the conservation of America’s wild birds sprung up across the nation, and Bird Day was integrated into the school curricula of several states.<sup>320</sup> As many scholars have pointed out, a great deal of this intense interest in wilderness felt by wealthy white men stemmed from sublimated socio-economic anxieties, not least about immigration.<sup>321</sup> Thus did the millionaire William Hornaday pour his energies and considerable resources into preserving the last remaining wild American bison - by taxidermising them if necessary.<sup>322</sup> The strength of yearning to capture wilderness varied in almost direct proportion to the vividness with which wilderness was perceived to be vanishing.

The need to preserve the State of Nature was also a core rationalization for American imperial rule over Hawaii. Annexation had been pursued primarily for strategic reasons.<sup>323</sup> But it was justified after the fact by gesturing to the need to protect native Hawaiians from the corrupting influence of civilization itself. As one American economist wrote of Hawaii's nineteenth century:

Although the processes of civilization were never gentler or less destructive of native autonomy, the decay of aboriginal society when brought into contact with an advanced social order was no less in-

319 Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, Kindle location 115.

320 Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 31-32.

321 Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness.”; Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” *Social Text* 11 (1984); Gray Brechin, “Conserving the Race: Natural Aristocracies, Eugenics, and the U.S. Conservation Movement,” *Antipode* 28(1996)

322. Barrow, *Nature’s Ghosts*. Kindle location 2504.

323. Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 51; Lafeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, 56-60; Morgan, *Pacific Gibraltar*, 238.

evitable here than in regions where relations between the aboriginal and the civilized races were less happy.<sup>324</sup>

The notion that Polynesian culture has been "fatally impacted" by exposure to civilization dates from the first Cook voyage.<sup>325</sup> Now the argument was reworked to legitimize paternalistic governance, over the Hawaiian people and also their environment. After 1898, American naturalists and ethnographers descended on the new territory in order to catalogue its riches. These taxonomical carpet-baggers completed the occlusion of Laysan's guano mine, producing discursive representations of the island in which all traces of humans and their impact were excised completely.

Foremost among this new wave of naturalists was the ornithologist William Alanson Bryan. A devout Quaker sired in the nation's heartland, Bryan trained in zoology at the Iowa State College under Professor Charles Nutting, before arriving in Hawaii in 1900 to take up an appointment as resident taxidermist at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.<sup>326</sup> Bryan brought with him to the museum the cutting edge in American scientific and aesthetic sensibilities. As the museum's directors' report boasted that:

Mr. Bryan's method is the same used with such capital success in South Kensington, New York and other great museums, and it marks the passing of the old method of mounting stuffed birds upon stiff perches without any of their natural surroundings. We may place Mr. Bryan's work in the front ranks of modern taxidermy.<sup>327</sup>

324. Coman, *The History of Contract Labor in the Hawaiian Islands*, 1-2

325. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History*, 43-44.

326. The Bishop Museum had been established by the banker Charles Bishop in 1889 in memory of his late wife Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, the last legal heir of the Kamehameha Dynasty. The museum's founding mandate was "to preserve and exhibit to all who care to look relics of her people and the kindred races of the Pacific Ocean".

327. William T. Brigham, *Director's Report for 1902* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1903), 7.

As such, the exhibits curated by Bryan aimed not just to replicate individual specimens in lifelike postures, but to create simulacra of entire ecosystems in their prelapsarian state. These simulacra did not necessarily exclude native Hawaiians - one of Bryan's early tasks was to assemble a group of casts taken of natives into a diorama - but they most certainly omitted white and Asian immigrants, just as surely as they did "exotic" fauna and flora such as rats and sugarcane.<sup>328</sup> Neither were Asians the intended audience for the exhibits. The directors made sure to keep careful track of visitors to the museum by race (See [Figure 2.15](#)), noting with alarm the uptick in Japanese visitors "mainly from the laboring classes".<sup>329</sup> From 1902, concerned that "the lawless element of the community is increasing", the museum began placing as many exhibits as possible in glass cases for protection.<sup>330</sup>

In 1902 Bryan secured passage for his old advisor, Charles Nutting, aboard a research expedition bound for Laysan. The expedition, aboard the aptly named *U.S.S. Albatross*, was a joint-venture between the United States Fish Commission and Stanford University. As such it was something of a throwback to the eighteenth-century model of state-backed scientific exploration, combining commercially applicable hydrographic research with old-fashioned taxonomical survey.<sup>331</sup> The naturalists aboard the *Albatross* were thus the first to reach Laysan

328. *Ibid.*, 6-7. "The care and skill Mr. Bryan has shown in this work will give pleasure to many visitors in future years, and without the important accessories he has furnished, the admirable casts would be almost useless for the purpose intended - to illustrate the most important or characteristic employments of old Hawaiians."

329. William T. Brigham, *Director's Report for 1901* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1902), 9-10.

330. Brigham, *Director's Report for 1902*, 10.

331. Certainly, as befits the grand tradition of bickering between sailors and scientists, the captain of the *Albatross* complained bitterly about the haughtiness of the naturalists on board. Nutting, he wrote, had wantonly flouted his order regarding quarantine regulations. As for Dr. Gilbert, the leader of the Stanford group, "[he] could not be made to comprehend where his functions began and mine ceased or the contrary - he was 'the whole thing'. He would not attempt to consider my authority as at all to be regarded... I resent the idea that seems to

so without relying on the Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Company for transport. This does not mean that they did not avail themselves of its services, however. Max Schlemmer, Spencer's successor as King of Laysan (and a man who shall [figure prominently](#) in the story to come), provided them with board and lodging throughout their week-long stay on the island. He also directed the ornithologists towards particular nesting sites, informed them of the laying and hatching times of various species, and otherwise furnished them with his observations of bird life on the island. Both the Stanford ornithologists and the *Albatross's* commanding officer admitted that "it would have been very hard to accomplish the amount of work performed without such aid as he rendered".<sup>332</sup> But the Fish Commission's official report manages to express its gratitude to Schlemmer without mentioning exactly what it was he was doing on Laysan in the first place. Neither does mention the workforce of Japanese laborers he was supervising at the time.<sup>333</sup>

The year after the *Albatross* expedition, Bryan himself also visited Laysan on behalf of the Bishop Museum, traveling in the more conventional manner aboard Hackfeld & Co.'s chartered guano boat. Like the earlier expedition, Bryan expressed a debt of gratitude to Schlemmer, both for his hospitality and also his local knowledge of Laysan's bird life. In the unpublished field notes of his trip, Bryan did not trouble to excise the reality of the island as a

prevail on the Pacific coast that the ALBATROSS is a mere annex to Stanford University." NARA-II College Park, MD, RG 0022 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Commerce. Bureau of Fisheries. P 63 Records Concerning the Steamer Albatross: 1887-1926 Container 6 1900-1907 ARC#6106840: Thomas to Commissioner, 26 July 1902; Thomas to Dunlap, 15 August 1902.

332. Fisher, "Birds of Laysan and the Leeward Islands, Hawaiian Group," 789, 776; Thomas to Commissioner, 5 June 1902 in Records Concerning the Steamer Albatross

333. The closest the report comes to mentioning the existence of a guano mine on Laysan is its oblique reference to some "old piles of broken phosphate rock" located in the central portion of the island, where "the best deposits of commercial rock are to be found." *Ibid.*, 774.

guano mine worked by Japanese laborers. On the outbound voyage, he wrote of the "flock of forty-five or more Japs on board [who] eat and sleep and jabber away like monkeys." For the return voyage, he noted how the timing of departure was dictated by the need to ship guano back to Honolulu. Bryan also jotted down a brief history of the island's human habitation, leaving little doubt that he was well-appraised of Laysan's recent history. He even made a point of noting the location of the graves of the two Japanese who had died in the 1900 labor dispute.<sup>334</sup>

None of this information found its way into Bryan's public representations of Laysan, which instead conventionally depicted the island's environment as a pristine, uninhabited wilderness. Later, Nutting and Bryan would collaborate in a campaign to construct a Laysan Cyclorama in Iowa State University's Museum of Natural History. (See [Figure 2.16](#)) "The aim of the habitat diorama," writes Rachel Poliquin:

was to create an immaculate vision of nature uncontaminated by human presence in order to instill in urban dwellers a deep respect for nature, or what might more accurately be described as a deep longing for a wilderness at the edge of existence...Dioramas tantalized visitors with the possibility of communion with nature, the possibility of experiencing nature's truth. Despite the fact that the animals were all hunted down for the purpose, despite the skinning, the theatrical postures, and the artificial surroundings, dioramas were meant to suggest unhindered access to raw nature.<sup>335</sup>

334. BMC William Alanson Bryan collection: "A Voyage to Laysan" (unpublished field notebook, 1903) Bryan's attitudes toward the Japanese as a race are hinted at in his (unpublished) description of an incident that occurred during the outward voyage to Laysan. Some guano miners attempted to butcher a shark that had been caught by one of the sailors, but (Bryan writes) "just a few minutes ago one came in with his arm bound round in two places and his hand all torn & bleeding. The fool had stuck his hand in its mouth and it had clamped on him. He was the whitest looking Jap I ever saw...He will be lucky if blood poisoning doesn't set in."

335. Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo : Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 104.

This was certainly the effect that Bryan and Nutting aimed at. In a fund-raising appeal aimed at alumni, Nutting recalled the transcendence he had experienced when immersed in Laysan's "great metropolis of oceanic birds":

Try as we may, this scene can not be described, and as day after day the wonder of it grew and deepened, the writer found constantly recurring and intensifying the great desire to have it reproduced as a masterpiece of art for the benefit of the State University and the people of Iowa.<sup>336</sup>

In other words, by posing stuffed bird carcasses in such a way that they merge artfully into a panoramic painted backdrop, the ornithologists hoped to produce, for the museum-going public, Laysan as a pure, untrammled State of Nature. In an age before wildlife photography, the twinned representational technologies of taxidermy and landscape painting were crucial to the success of the project, for they would succeed - where words failed - in capturing the sublime. A first-rate landscape painter schooled in the techniques of naturalism was necessary to make the whole thing suitably lifelike: "Any inferior work would make the whole thing cheap and theatrical, instead of a dignified work of art that will satisfy cultured artistic taste." As for the taxidermist, he combined the vocations of naturalist and sculptor, being of necessity an expert at anatomy, in-field observation, specimen preservation and composition. In support of the scheme, Nutting cited Carl Akeley, "probably the best taxidermist in the world", who vouched that the Laysan cyclorama, "if successfully carried out, would be a beautiful piece of art, unequalled in its way in the world."<sup>337</sup> Discussing Akeley's taxidermy exhibits in the American Museum of Natural History, Donna Haraway writes that:

336. Charles C. Nutting, "The Laysan Island Scheme" *Iowa Alumnus*, January 1909.

337. *Ibid.*

A diorama is eminently a story, a part of natural history. The story is told in the pages of nature, read by the naked eye. The animals in the habitat groups are captured in a photographer's and a sculptor's vision. They are actors in a morality play on the stage of nature, and the eye is the critical organ.<sup>338</sup>

What makes diorama so effective is the utter lack of social context which mediates between spectator and tableau. Unlike Schauinsland's travelogue, even the self is excised. As Haraway puts it:

one enters alone, each individual sole, as part of no stable prior community and without confidence in the substance of one's body, in order to be received into a saved community...No matter how people crowd the Great Hall, the experience is one of individual communion with nature. The sacrament will be enacted for each worshipper.<sup>339</sup>

The staging of the Laysan Island Cyclorama, in transporting museum-goers from the American heartland to the middle of the North Pacific, aimed to enact just such a sacrament.<sup>340</sup> In this sense, the cyclorama represents the apogee of two different yet related trends in the production of ornithological knowledge. Since the time of Linnaeus, naturalists had sought unmediated access to albatrosses, on the grounds that first-hand observation of the birds was more reliable than that filtered through local informants such as sailors or (latterly) guano mine superintendents. In this effort they had been somewhat successful, partly thanks to voyages of exploration such as those backed by the Royal Navy or the United States Fish Commission, and partly thanks to the expanding market frontier, that had integrated islands such as Laysan into the global economy.

But at the same time as they sought access to *albatrosses*, naturalists also sought to

338. Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," 29.

339. *Ibid.*, 29.

340. At the time of writing the cyclorama is still on display at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, and indeed was recently refurbished for its centenary. See <http://www.uiowa.edu/mnh/laysan/laysan/laysan-main.htm> Last accessed 27 January 2015.

reproduce *the albatross* discursively so as to fix upon its true nature. And by the late nineteenth century the influence of Romanticism meant that - notwithstanding the fact that naturalists remained reliant as ever on human presence in order to harvest their observations - this true nature was implicitly understood to be untrammelled by human presence. The Laysan Island cyclorama resolved this paradox by occluding all traces of the human from its tableau: not just the naturalists but also the mine, the guano packing sheds and, immediately to the south of them, the graves of the two murdered Japanese.

### 3. Wildlife and Sovereignty Conservation

#### Protecting “Native Birds” in the Post-Annexation Hawaiian Borderlands

*Roosevelt and Bryan on Nature, Empire and Race*

*Hawaii from Borderland to Bordered Land*

*The Cable Comes to Midway Island*

*The Lisianski Incident of 1904*

*Max Schlemmer, “King of Laysan”*

*The United States versus Max Schlemmer*

*Conserving Nature and Sovereignty on Laysan and Midway*

In January 1910 the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Thetis* stopped at Laysan Island to discover twenty-three Japanese engaged in a systematic bird slaughtering and skinning operation. The captain arrested the hunters for poaching, and transported them to Honolulu along with 259,000 bird wings, valued by the Customs Agency at \$112,000 in total. The arrest and subsequent deportation of these hunters marked the culmination of a decade-long effort by the United States government, in collaboration with ornithologists, to protect the birds of Laysan and the other Northwest Hawaiian Islands from Japanese “depredation”. If the previous chapter described the process by which naturalists produced representations of Laysan’s State of Nature that circulated amongst audiences back home, then this chapter traces a parallel but connected process: their campaign, in collaboration with the U.S. government, to produce

wilderness on Laysan by evicting Japanese bird hunters. This effort can be understood as part of broader state project carried out during the 1900s: the transformation of Hawaii from a borderland space into a bordered one, through the imposition of stricter regulations governing the migration of Japanese into the archipelago and the activities they might engage in there. In post-Annexation Hawaii, conserving wild birds also served to conserve sovereignty.

The chapter begins with a broad assessment of the mindset governing white American officialdom at the turn of the twentieth century, regarding issues such as nature conservation, imperial and colonial expansion, and race. It then turns to examine the political economy of post-Annexation Hawaii, where the new American administration struggled to reduce what it saw as an outsized and unruly Japanese presence within the archipelago. It was against this background that American ornithologists, together with the U.S. Navy and Revenue Cutter Service, sought to evict Japanese bird hunters from the sparsely inhabited outlying islands of Midway, Lisianski and Laysan. This effort culminated in 1909 with President Roosevelt's order to establish the Northwest Hawaiian Islands Reservation, and the subsequent federal prosecution of Max Schlemmer, the erstwhile "King of Laysan". The chapter concludes with a brief history of wilderness conservation efforts on Laysan and Midway since 1911, up to the creation of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument by President George W. Bush.

### **Roosevelt and Bryan on Nature, Empire and Race**

To understand the history of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands in the decade after American Annexation, the mind of Theodore Roosevelt is a good place to start. Not because the President was himself pivotal in directing the course of events there (although he did

intervene directly at one point) but because, in his attitudes towards Nature, colonialism and race, the he was so typical of the white American males who set policy in the newly formed U.S. Territory of Hawaii. Roosevelt's passion for Nature is well known: from his childhood spent acquiring specimens for his natural history collection to his post-presidential career as explorer, naturalist and Big Game Hunter.<sup>341</sup> He was also a keen nature conservationist. He oversaw passage of the 1906 Antiquities Act, which empowered the President to designate particular sites as national monuments of either cultural or natural importance. And in 1908 he convened the first ever Governors' Conference on the Conservation of Natural Resources (which the Governor of Hawaii also attended), integrating nature conservation into federal government policy for the first time.<sup>342</sup> By all accounts he ranks alongside John Muir, John Perkins Marsh and Gifford Pinchot as one of the architects of the modern conservation movement.<sup>343</sup>

For Roosevelt, nature conservation was not merely about the sustainable husbanding of economic resources such as forests for future use, but about conserving Nature as a source of moral and spiritual strength. He was not unusual in this: the split between "utilitarian" conservationists and those who claimed to value Nature for its own sake did not emerge until conservationism was elevated to the level of state policy. But even as these disputes began to play out among members of Roosevelt's own administration, the President remained a fully paid-up subscriber to Frederick Jackson's Frontier Theory of American history, in which the vitality of American civilization stemmed from its dialectical engagement with untamed

341. Barrow, *A Passion for Birds*.

342. Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*. Kindle location 214, 4272, 4285; HSA Frear President: Presidential Secretary to Frear, 6 February 1908.

343. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Worster, *Nature's Economy*. Kindle location 4286 .

wilderness. (See [Chapter Two](#)) Nature was not merely a source of material commodities but a testing ground in which to cultivate the masculine virtues that would equip one for the great struggle of Life itself. Again, such beliefs were widely shared among his contemporaries: various scholars have explored how, toward the end of the nineteenth century virile engagement with wilderness came to be constitutive of elite white masculinity on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>344</sup>

Roosevelt was also an ardent imperialist. A devotee of the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, he pushed for expansion of the U.S. fleet during his time as Assistant Under-Secretary of the Navy. And he was one of the primary instigators of the 1898 war with Spain, which led to the dramatic extension of American power into the Pacific. Roosevelt not only led his rough-riders personally into battle during the American invasion of Cuba, he also ordered the U.S. Navy to occupy the Spanish Philippines without the knowledge of his direct superior.<sup>345</sup>

Roosevelt's unapologetic affirmation of formal American empire was intimately tied up with his ideas about race, themselves informed by a stew of Spencerian and eugenicist theories of historical development. Imperialism was to be welcomed as a tutelary process conducted for the benefit of the lower races; at the same time colonial conquest was an unavoidable outcome of the great Social Darwinistic struggle between the races. He urged his

344. Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy."; Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Yale University Press, 2013)

345. William O Walker, *National Security and Core Values in American History* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2009)

fellow Americans to embrace war or “stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.”<sup>346</sup> Elsewhere he wrote that:

Nineteenth century democracy needs no more complete vindication for its existence than the fact that it has kept for the white race the best portions of the new worlds’ surface, temperate America and Australia.<sup>347</sup>

The latter quote is from Roosevelt’s review of Charles Pearson’s *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, a book which warned that white settler societies were at risk of one day being overwhelmed by migration from the populous Asiatic nations. The book influenced Roosevelt deeply, inspiring him to write to Pearson personally to tell him of its “great effect” on American policy makers:

All our men here in Washington . . . were greatly interested in what you said. In fact, I don't suppose that any book recently, unless it is Mahan's 'Influence of Sea Power' has excited anything like as much interest or has caused so many men to feel that they had to revise their mental estimates of facts.<sup>348</sup>

As a result, Roosevelt was distinctly ambivalent about the rising power of the Empire of Japan. In 1905 he personally brokered the Treaty of Portsmouth ending Japan’s war with Russia, and he admired the vigor with which the Meiji oligarchs had forged a modern, industrial nation capable of besting a European great power on the battlefield. And he had fond hopes of cultivating the nation as an ally of the United States. But he also saw Japan as a potential rival for American dominance in the Pacific. In 1898 he argued for Hawaiian

346. Hofstadter, Richard, American Historical Association., Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund., *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 180.

347. Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Mens Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, 101.

348. *Ibid.*, 101.

Annexation by emphasizing the strategic threat posed by Japanese migration to the islands.<sup>349</sup> These concerns continued to preoccupy him during his presidency. After the Russo-Japanese War, he worried, Japan “might get the 'big head' and enter into a general career of insolence and aggression.”<sup>350</sup> Part of the reason Roosevelt sought to cultivate good relations with Japan was that he (accurately) perceived that America's new empire in the Pacific was strategically over-extended. The American occupation of the Philippines had become mired in a protracted counter-insurgency conflict against Filipino nationalists.<sup>351</sup> The Panama Canal, a project that Roosevelt had championed personally, also remained bogged down in construction difficulties throughout most of his presidency.<sup>352</sup> (It would not open until 1914.) This meant that the U.S. Navy could not effectively project power in two oceans at once.

This anxiety about American strategic vulnerability informed Roosevelt's handling of the crisis that engulfed his second term in office, the dispute over Japanese immigration to the United States. The crisis erupted in October 1906 when the San Francisco School Board voted to segregate the city's primary schools into Japanese and non-Japanese schools. Suddenly the President found himself caught between nativist anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast and a Japanese government that insisted the segregation policy infringed its status as a most favored nation.<sup>353</sup> Roosevelt had little sympathy with the segregationists - “the

349. Lafeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, 257-259.

350. *Theodore Roosevelt Letters IV*, 830: Roosevelt to Spring Rice, 13 June 1904.

351. Renato Constantino, *A History of the Philippines* (Monthly Review Press, 2010), Ch.14.

352. Charles E. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1900-1909* (Harvard University Press, 1967), 91

353. *Ibid.*, 32-31; Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion (Library Reprint)* (University of California Press, 1978)

idiots in the California legislature”.<sup>354</sup> But he nevertheless reflexively viewed Japanese immigrants as an "alien mass", biologically incapable of assimilating with the white nation that was America. His irritation with the segregationists mainly stemmed from his awareness of the toxic diplomatic fallout that would ensue from racist legislation targeting Japanese nationals. At the height of the dispute Roosevelt felt relations between the two countries to be so tense that he instructed the Navy to begin wargaming a possible conflict with Japan.<sup>355</sup> This fear was unfounded, in the sense that there is zero archival evidence that the Japanese Foreign Ministry even contemplated such a drastic course of action.<sup>356</sup> But Roosevelt was nevertheless worried enough that in the summer of 1907 he despatched the U.S. fleet on a round-the-world voyage via the Pacific, hoping to display American military might for the benefit of Japan audiences.<sup>357</sup>

The immigration crisis was eventually defused in February 1907 by the face-saving “Gentleman’s Agreement”, whereby the Japanese Foreign Ministry voluntarily agreed to limit Japanese emigration to the United States. The elegance of the Gentleman’s Agreement was that it cloaked racially motivated exclusionary agenda in the language of civilization and national autonomy. In this sense it was the result of a process that played out between 1880 and 1910, in which:

354. Theodore Roosevelt Letters IV 1168-70 cited in Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1960-1909*, 23-24.

355. Lafeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, 90.

356. Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 147-150.

357. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1960-1909*, 116-117.

Pressures from Asian nations and proponents of free mobility and racial equality eventually caused [immigration] controls to be reformulated in ways that appeared nondiscriminatory.<sup>358</sup>

The effort to evict Japanese hunters from Hawaiian bird islands deployed many of the same strategies that the Roosevelt administration used to resolve the immigration crisis. Diplomatic dialogue was favored over domestic legislation, at least initially. And racial anxiety was subsumed beneath the rhetoric of enlightened concern for wildlife.

### **Hawaii from Borderland to Bordered Land**

Much of Roosevelt's outlook on Nature, imperialism and race was shared by the ornithologist William Alanson Bryan. As we saw in [Chapter Two](#), Bryan arrived in Hawaii in 1900 to take up a position as taxidermist at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. Before leaving, however, he had also been deputized by Roosevelt as Special Inspector, Birds and Animals in the new American colony.<sup>359</sup> If Bryan was markedly more ambivalent about than Roosevelt about the virtues of imperial conquest, he nevertheless saw it as inexorable:

This greedy process of over-running the world has been swifter than was desirable in either the conquered or the conqueror[.] But it became inevitable so soon as the progress of science had increased the cheapness of both production and transportation.<sup>360</sup>

Bryan was also keen eugenicist, who believed that interbreeding between whites and Japanese would result in offspring “apt to be physically inferior to the average of either

358 McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*. Kindle location 289.

359. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Interior Secretary to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1 December 1904.

360. UHM William Alanson Bryan Collection: William Alanson Bryan, “Race Contact”. This lecture was prepared for delivery at the Honolulu Union Church on 19 May 1911.

parent stock”. For Bryan, contact between the two races in the Pacific potentially marked “a world crisis in our own time”. With white colonialism effectively a *fait accompli*, racial conflict could only be averted by devising means to prohibit Japanese migration into white-controlled economic space:

The work of annexing countries by the Europeans that are inhabited by the colored races is now practically complete. The preventing of contact of this character is only practicable when measures are taken to prevent the people of one race entering the territory of the other for economic reasons.<sup>361</sup>

After arriving in Hawaii (see [Figures 3.1](#) & [3.2](#)), Bryan threw himself into the public life of the new American Territory. As well as playing a prominent role in the Bishop Museum (feuding bitterly with its director in the process), he worked with the HSPA to introduce pest-eating bird species to sugar plantations, and also established a Pacific Science Institution<sup>362</sup>. In 1914 he even mounted a campaign for the Hawaiian governorship.<sup>363</sup>

In the summer of 1902, as we saw in [Chapter One](#), Bryan accompanied “the ancient mariner” Captain Rosehill in his failed expedition to reclaim Marcus Island from Japanese occupation. The voyage made a powerful impression on him. As well as his visceral horror at the destruction of the island’s birdlife, the whole expedition was suffused with the frisson of colonial rivalry. He described the landing on Marcus as “the most exciting experience of my life”:

361. *Ibid.*

362. UHM William Alanson Bryan Collection, Bryan misc correspondence: Brigham to Bryan, 25 January 1909; Bryan misc correspondence: HSPA Assistant Secretary to Bryan, 9 December 1914; NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Education: “Pacific Science Institution”.

363. UHM William Alanson Bryan Collection, Bryan scrapbook 1912-: “Professor Bryan Home: Confident of Chances for Governorship”; “Pinkham Next Governor of Hawaii: Nomination Made by President Wilson Receives the Approval of the Senate”.

Had the little ninety-ton schooner sighted land three days earlier, it is hardly likely that Captain Rosehill would have had to petition the United States to put him in control of his rightful possession.

As it was, when our little company of ocean-tossed explorers reached the island we had always called our own, it was to find the Japanese flag boldly flying over the tree tops from a pole a hundred feet high. Other emblems waved in the breeze from every point of view, and a band of half-dressed coolies scurried about like crabs on the beach. It was obvious that we were both anticipated and expected.<sup>364</sup>

On his return to Hawaii, Bryan lent his scientific authority to Rosehill's public campaign to restore American sovereignty over Marcus, which rumbled on from the summer of 1902 until late 1903.<sup>365</sup> He claimed, for instance, that the island had strategic value to Washington as a cable station, with "better facilities for a cable landing than Wake or Midway Islands".<sup>366</sup> He wrote to Governor Dole on the matter, who replied thanking him for his "interesting paper".<sup>367</sup> Personally, however, Bryan was skeptical that the State Department would bother risking a military confrontation over Marcus.<sup>368</sup> In an essay titled "America's Lost Possessions" he wrote that "what happened at Marcus Island is part of the same story told of [guano

364. BM William Alanson Bryan collection: William Alanson Bryan, "America's Lost Possessions" [m.s.]

365. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midouei-i'-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: "Consul Saito Disputes Marcus Island Story".

366. "Scientist Bryan Says Marcus Island Would Make Splendid Cable Landing" *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 12 September 1902.

367. BM William Alanson Bryan collection: Dole to Bryan, 19 September [n.d.]

368. Bryan was right to be skeptical. The State Department eventually rejected Rosehill's appeal for intervention over Marcus, as "this Government finds itself embarrassed in taking the initiative by the fact that Captain Rosehill's claim under our Guano Act was not perfected by filing a bond until after Japan had proclaimed sovereignty over the island." NARA-II MD State Dept Guano Islands: Assistant Secretary of State to John M. Thurston, 18 March 1903

islands such as] Palmyra and Jarvis and Baker. All of them were American possessions once.”<sup>369</sup>

Bryan’s anxiety about Japanese erosion of American sovereignty in the Pacific was crystallized by his experience on Marcus Island. But it also derived from ambient white anxiety about the Japanese presence in the Territory of Hawaii. As we saw in the previous chapter, the territorial sovereignty of Hawaii prior to Annexation was a circumscribed one, in which various foreign governments had reserved the right for their citizens to be tried through extraterritorial courts, and had deployed gunboat diplomacy when they felt the rights of their resident nationals were being infringed. As a sovereign nation, a unique feature of Hawaii’s diplomatic relations had been an 1886 treaty signed with Japan, which gave the latter country substantial sway in setting the former’s immigration policy. The Japanese Foreign Ministry had been sufficiently keen to protect the rights of its citizens to migrate to Hawaii that in 1897, when the newly established Hawaiian Republic attempted to deport a boatload of Japanese migrants, Tokyo dispatched a frigate to Honolulu to remonstrate. Similarly, Tokyo’s attempt to coordinate diplomatic opposition to U.S. Annexation had stemmed in large part from the (quite justified) concern that annexation would eventually serve to circumscribe Japanese immigration rights. Even when Japan dropped its opposition to Annexation, it did so whilst insisting that the existing rights of Japanese nationals be safeguarded after transition to U.S. rule.<sup>370</sup>

At the time of Annexation, Japanese citizens made up over one third of Hawaii’s total population. So it was inevitable that the question of their exact legal status would top the list

369. BM William Alanson Bryan collection: William Alanson Bryan, “America’s Lost Possessions” [m.s.]

370. Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 53.

of concerns for the incoming American administration. The 1900 Organic Act, described in [Chapter Two](#), was an attempt to address just this issue. But although the Organic Act stopped short of granting citizenship rights to Hawaii's Asian population, it did, by abolishing indentured labor within the Territory, have a number of unintended ramifications that reverberated through both Hawaii and the continental U.S.

The first was that it encouraged Japanese sugarcane laborers to organize. The ensuing disputes often descended into violence. The clash on Laysan that ended in the murder of two guano miners was of the earliest and most gruesome instances of this. Across the Hawaiian archipelago for over a decade, newly bestowed concepts of American liberty continued to mix uneasily with a plantation economy hitherto reliant on large quantities of indentured migrant labor. At a strike on the Lahaina plantation in 1905, shots were fired, killing a striker, and the situation turned so tense that National Guardsmen armed with artillery were despatched from Honolulu. On Oahu's Waipahu plantation, another strike broke out the next year.<sup>371</sup> The English-language press began to stoke fears of marauding Japanese plantation workers.<sup>372</sup> One Honolulu-based solicitor wrote to the State Department warning that:

things are not very steady here owing to the labor situation, Japanese trouble and other minor things. You probably know that there are 65,000 Japanese in these islands out of an entire population of a little over 150,000. Since the war they have gotten the swell head and are literally trying to run things out here.<sup>373</sup>

As well as spurring unionization among sugar workers, the Organic Act also had the effect of unleashing Japanese mobility, both inside and beyond Hawaii. With their indentures

371. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 150-151.

372. *Hawaiian Star*, "Trouble Threatened on Maui", 1905.

373. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: H.R. Castle to W.S. Rossiter, 5th December 1906.

invalidated, Japanese workers could now leave their plantations and take up alternative work elsewhere in the territory, just as the previous wave of Chinese migrants had done. Japanese began to make inroads into areas of the economy formerly dominated by whites, such as shipping, construction and metalwork. They also began to work as fishermen and stevedores, occupations that had previously been the preserve of native Hawaiians.<sup>374</sup> By 1920 fishing in Hawaiian waters would be performed almost exclusively by Japanese.<sup>375</sup>

Moreover, many Japanese laborers chose to leave Hawaii altogether in favor of the continental United States - and this was where Hawaiian politics became inextricably connected with the California immigration crisis. In the years following annexation, Honolulu became a major transit hub for Japanese migrants heading to America's Pacific Coast. After the passage of the Organic Act, migration companies that had once recruited indentured labor for Hawaii's sugar plantations now essentially transformed into shipping companies for free migrants. Many of these passengers chose to travel on to the continental U.S. - where wages were rumored to be higher - almost immediately after disembarking. Honolulu boarding houses competed to facilitate the new arrivals' onward passage: as one hotelier advertised, "crossing from Hawaii to the American mainland is as easy as traveling from Taiwan to Kobe."<sup>376</sup> Contractors from Seattle and Vancouver also began to scour Honolulu, recruiting labor for the fish canneries and railways of the Pacific Northwest. Frances M. Hatch, the president of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA), displayed a blithe lack of awareness as to the recruitment practices that Hawaiian planters

374. Moriyama, *Imingaisha*, 137.

375. Ogawa Manako, "Hawai ni okeru Nihonjin no gyosangyō kaitakushi: 1900-nen kara 1920-nendai made o chūshin ni," *Ritsumeikan gogen bunka kenkyū* 21, no. 4.

376. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: Ebisuya Hotel circular letter.

themselves relied upon when he denounced on-migration to the U.S. as “entirely artificial, being brought about by the active efforts of runners and employers of labor who have infested Hawaii.”<sup>377</sup> American Annexation had the unexpected effect of transforming Hawaii into a trans-Pacific labor entrepôt.<sup>378</sup>

U.S. authorities, together with Hawaiian planter interests, moved to curb the flow of Japanese immigration in a number of ways. On-migration to the continental United States was the easiest problem to solve, in the sense that both the Hawaiian and federal governments were opposed to it unambiguously. Initially the Hawaii attempted to clamp down on the activities of recruiters by requiring them to apply for a \$500 annual license to operate within the Territory.<sup>379</sup> Then in 1907, at the same time the Gentleman’s Agreement was implemented, Congress passed new legislation to close the Hawaiian migration route definitively. From hereon, Japanese in possession of passports issued only for Hawaii would be barred from entering the continental United States.<sup>380</sup>

Japanese migration to Hawaii was a trickier matter, for planters relied on the migrants as a cheap source of labor. In 1906 the HSPA’s Hatch had warned Elihu Root, the U.S. Secretary of State, that “it would be difficult to over-state the extent of the disaster that would overtake Hawaii in case immigration from Japan should suddenly cut off.”<sup>381</sup> This reliance

377. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: Hatch to Root, 6 February 1907.

378. Moriyama, *Imingaisha*, 133-134.

379. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 144.

380. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: Root to Carter, 19 February 1907.

381. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: Hatch to Root, 16 December 1906.

also prompted Hatch to downplay the idea of the Japanese as a threat to political stability in Hawaii:

We are constantly reading in the papers, and hearing speeches from California members of Congress statements that Hawaii has become thoroughly “Japanned”; that Americans are being crowded to the well there by Japanese competition, and that Hawaii today is to all intents and purposes a Japanese colony pure and simple. This style of talk has so little foundation in fact that it may be said to be little better than bosh... Having no vote, and not being entitled to take up the public lands, [the Japanese] are of no political significance whatsoever. The whole 60,000 have not even one representative on the police force. The Japanese have helped develop Hawaii and made the waste places blossom like the rose.<sup>382</sup>

In fact, as soon as the first Japanese cane-cutter strikes had broken out in 1900, the HSPA had begun exploring new sources of migrant labor, hoping to dilute the ethnic homogeneity of the plantation workforce and thereby weaken worker solidarity. America’s new Philippine colony seemed to have promise, and migrants from Korea were especially sought after - in the remarkably cynical hope that the well-known animosity between the two nations would impede unionization.<sup>383</sup> But these hesitant early efforts failed to substantially alter the racial composition of the plantation workforce, which by 1908 was still seventy per cent Japanese.<sup>384</sup>

The sugar economy’s reliance on Japanese labor prevented the Territorial Government from restricting Japanese migration to Hawaii outright. Instead, it focussed on curbing their opportunities to find work outside the plantation. The Honolulu Superintendent of Public

382. NARA-II MD, State Dept 1906-10, Japanese Immigration Crisis: Hatch to Adee, 13 February 1907.

383. *Ibid.*, 26.

384. *Ibid.*, 163.

Works forbade contractors from employing “Asiatic labor” on road repair crews, and in 1902 the government announced that “aliens must pay duty of one cent per pound on fish caught in sea waters off Hawaii.”<sup>385</sup> But by now Japanese comprised nearly forty per cent of Hawaii’s total population, and in that year alone migration companies brought another 14,490 from Japan.<sup>386</sup> Piecemeal measures could only achieve so much. For this reason the Territorial Government began attempting to adjust Hawaii’s racial make-up by subsidizing white immigration to the islands. Initially, the government hoped to fund this program by securing voluntary donations from the HSPA, but this policy foundered when it was discovered to be in contravention of a law banning private subsidy of immigration.<sup>387</sup> (Ironically, this law had been originally been introduced primarily for the purpose of limiting migration from East Asia.)<sup>388</sup>

The urgency of the Japanese labor problem was ratcheted up in the years following the signing of the Gentlemen’s Agreement, and Roosevelt’s subsequent closure of the on-migration route to the U.S. Although the new law helped to relieve racial tensions in California, it had the unintended consequence of inflaming labor relations in Hawaii. Hawaiian planters had resented what they felt to be the poaching of their workforce by recruiters from outside the Territory. But they had not appreciated that on-migration had also acted as a release valve, allowing discontented plantation workers to leave Hawaii in search of better working conditions elsewhere. The closure of the valve resulted in an uptick in labor union militancy which took both planters and the Territorial Government by surprise.

385. Moriyama, *Imingaisha*, 145.

386. US Census 1900; *Ibid.*, 52.

387. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Memo on Hawaiian Affairs: President of Board of Immigration to Governor Carter, 7 May 1907.

388. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*.

In the winter of 1908 two Japanese newspaper editors and a drugstore owner organized the Higher Wages Association, and issued a series of demands to the HSPA - including increased pay and a higher proportion of Japanese workers promoted to supervisor positions on the plantations. Their demands were ignored, and the following summer a general strike broke out that spread to every major sugar plantation on Oahu. The HSPA coordinated planters in attempting to crush the strike, but initially this only served to recruit more laborers to the HWA's cause. The strike split the Japanese community, with some seven thousand laborers participating but vocal opposition from many business owners. The more radical faction took to deploying the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism to bolster their case, and when the HSPA informed the English-language press that strikers were using phrases such as "Yamato spirit" as rallying calls, it only served to confirm the long-held suspicions of many whites. The former head of the USDA's Hawaiian agricultural station warned Roosevelt of his belief that the strikes were secretly being coordinated by Tokyo:

We are having industrial troubles with this race and there have been threats on the part of the Japanese of murder, assassination and destruction of plantation properties by fire, although thus far nothing more serious than what seems to be a concerted effort to get all the Japanese laborers in Hawaii to go on a strike, has come of it.

I have been informed though what I believe to be reliable sources that the unrest among these people in Hawaii was caused and is being fomented and encouraged by official representatives of the Japanese Government who have been sent to Hawaii for that purpose...<sup>389</sup>

By no means every white in Hawaii believed such conspiracy theories. But the strikes of 1909 were so alarming that the HSPA redoubles its efforts to diversify its labor force. The

389. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Labor, Jared G. Smith to Wilson, 29 January 1909.

director of Hackfeld & Co. directed planters to use workers of “other nationalities” as strikebreakers. In July 1909 the HSPA accelerated its recruitment of laborers from the Philippines, so that by 1915 the percentage of Japanese workers on sugar plantations would be reduced to only fifty-four per cent.<sup>390</sup>

That same year, the Governor of Hawaii also revived the attempt “to offset the large percentage of Japanese laborers now within the Territory by a desirable class of Europeans eligible for citizenship”. A two per cent tax was levied on incomes above four thousand dollars, in order to fund a recruitment drive by the Board of Immigration. Board recruiters scoured the more impoverished nations of Europe, enticing emigrants to Hawaii with offers of subsidized passage and land grants once they arrived.<sup>391</sup> The number of permanent immigrants brought to Hawaii in this way never amounted to more than a trickle, but the effort and expense that the territorial government devoted to the matter reveal the extent of its anxiety about the Japanese presence.

### **The Cable Comes to Midway Island**

It was against this backdrop of unease about the encroaching yellow peril that the U.S. government’s attention was drawn to the series of remote islands extending to the west of the main Hawaiian archipelago. The history of one of these islands, Laysan, has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Another was Lisianski Island, named after a Russian navigator and claimed by the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1857, the same year that it claimed

390. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 161-163. As Takaki describes, this strategy was only temporarily effective. Within just over a decade Japanese and Filipino labor organizers succeeded in coordinating an inter-ethnic strike among cane-cutters.

391. HSA Governor Frear, Territorial - Immigration 1907-1909: “Immigration”.

Laysan. At the time of Annexation Lisianski was formally under lease to the Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Co, the same firm that had operated a guano mine on the Laysan since 1890. In practice though, the company had as yet made no attempt to exploit Lisianski, or even to survey it. The third island of interest is Midway, which during the Pacific War would give its name to a decisive naval battle between the U.S. and Japan. Midway had been claimed for the United States in 1859, as part of an abortive attempt to establish a coaling station.<sup>392</sup> But since that failure, no attempt had been made to settle the island.<sup>393</sup> Indeed the pre-Annexation Hawaiian government seems to have been either unaware of or indifferent to the American claim to Midway, for in 1894 it leased the island to the PGFC for a period of twenty-five years - along with Morrell Island, Ocean Island, Pearl and Hermes Reef and the French Frigate Shoals, the other islands in the group.<sup>394</sup>

It is unclear at what point Japanese bird hunters began to operate on these islands, but the first documentary hint of their activity dates to August 1900, when the Hawaiian Governor's Office received an enquiry from the Japanese consul in Honolulu regarding:

the status and ownership of a number of islands, lying to the north-westward of this group, of which Midway Island is the most important and well known, with a view of the Japanese government to lease any of all of the aforesaid islands for a number of years.

392 The Pacific Mail Company "intended forming a depot here for their Trans-Pacific steamers, in preference to Honolulu, which was thought to be under foreign influence, establishing here a coaling and refreshment station." But this project was abandoned in 1867, after a debacle in which a reef-breaking ship was itself shipwrecked and its crew had to be rescued. See Findlay, *Navigation of the North Pacific*, 1117; Jan Tenbruggencate, "Historic Hawai'i wreck found" *Honolulu Advertiser*, 18 October 2003. Last accessed 1 July 2015

393. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations, Alexander to Dole, 28 August 1900.

394. HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co., 43; NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations, lease signed between J.A. King and the North Pacific Phosphate and Fertilizer Company, 24 February 1894.

I may say that the object of this lease is to secure permission or right of fishing and bird-catching by the Japanese subjects. This right, however, will not work to the extinction of the birds on these Islands, nor to the lessening of the number already there, as a close season, or breeding-time would be kept by any of the subjects of Japan resorting to those islands for the aforesaid purpose.

Governor Sanford B. Dole declined the Japanese consul's request. He later wrote to the Secretary of the Interior that:

There are reasons why this destruction of birds should be prevented, - the sentimental one and the commercial one, in that by their use of these uninhabited [sic] islands and reefs as breeding and resting places a considerable deposit of valuable guano is produced.<sup>395</sup>

Dole's sentimentality regarding the birds of Midway is curious, considering that during his stint as President of the Republic of Hawaii (1894-1898) his government had leased islands out to guano mining operations without stipulating that the birdlife be protected.<sup>396</sup> In point of fact, he was concerned less about the destruction of birds *per se* than about whom they were to be destroyed by:

If this business of collecting bird skins is allowed should it not be limited to American citizens or at any rate to the residents of the Hawaiian Islands?

As it happened, the United States government would soon have its own plans for Midway. In 1902 the Commercial Pacific Cable Company announced that it would begin laying an undersea cable connecting San Francisco with Honolulu and Manila, and eventually with Shanghai. The new cable route had undeniable commercial potential: up until that point

395. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Dole to Interior Secretary 6 July 1903.

396. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations, lease signed between J.A. King and the North Pacific Phosphate and Fertilizer Company, 24 February 1894.

all cable traffic from the West Coast U.S.A. to East Asia travelled via the overloaded London-New York Atlantic line. But it also had a strategic application, as a telecommunications link for a country that had recently acquired a sprawling new Pacific empire, and was indeed engaged in a protracted counter-insurgency war in the Philippines. A trans-Pacific cable was so much in the national interest that at one point the U.S. government even considered laying its own, until the Pacific Commercial Cable Co.'s directors reassured Congress that a privately-owned route would confer the same strategic advantage at a lower price.<sup>397</sup>

The prospect of a cable in turn dramatically increased the strategic value of remote islands in the North Pacific, and in 1900 Secretary of State Hay commissioned a survey of U.S. insular possessions in the Pacific (most of them guano islands which had either abandoned or never even excavated) to see which could be used as landing stations.<sup>398</sup> Eventually Midway was selected, and the cable laying expedition departed for what one newspaper romantically described as “the loneliest place on earth” in April 1903.<sup>399</sup> But it was not quite so lonely as they might have hoped. When the landing party arrived on Midway, they discovered that a colony of Japanese bird hunters was already well established on the island, and:

397. Jonathan Reed Winkler, *By Jonathan Reed Winkler - Nexus: Strategic Communications and American Security in World War I: 1st (First) Edition* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 146-147. “Pacific Ocean Cable: Hearing Before the House Committee on Commerce” *Evening Star*, 11 January 1902.; “Proposed Pacific Cable: Hearing Before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee” *Evening Star*, 14 January 1902.

398. NARA-II State Department Guano Islands: J.D. Hague to Secretary of State John Hay, 9 February 1900.

399. “Off To Midway” *The Hawaiian Star*, 23 April 1903.

had been engaged for months in taking the birds. As a result of their work, they had practically denuded the islands of the albatros [sic] and the dusky tern, varieties that were to be found on Midway.<sup>400</sup>

Initially the cable company staff chose to reside alongside the bird hunters, but when Captain Rodman of the *U.S.S Iroquois* stopped at Midway some two months later, the station superintendent complained to him that:

the Japanese were slaughtering the birds in large numbers and the bodies of these birds, left upon the sand to decay, were producing an almost intolerable stench; were causing the houseflies to multiply rapidly; and lastly, but most important, the decaying bodies would sooner or later contaminate the water supply.<sup>401</sup>

Rodman promptly ordered the Japanese off the island, only to discover, a week later, the same crew ashore Lisianski Island engaged in exactly the same activity. Rodman once again ordered the bird hunters to leave, and on his return to Hawaii reported the issue to the Naval Department in Washington DC:

It would seem that for the past several years, the Japanese have been in the habit of visiting the various islands and slaughtering the birds in countless thousands... certain species of birds have been all but exterminated on Midway [in the last three years]. The Japanese collect the feathers, wings and skins of the different birds and find a ready market in France for all they can get.<sup>402</sup>

Rodman also provided a particularly harrowing description of the suffering that the Japanese hunters inflicted on the birds, a description that would become a staple of future accounts:

400. "Exterminated Midway Island" *The Hawaiian Star*, 30 June 1903.

401. National Magazine Vol. XXI No.4 (January 1905) published by The Bostonian Publishing Co, Boston. Dr. Martin Cook, "Our Cable Station in Mid-Pacific" (385-97), 388-389.

402. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Rodman to Assistant Secretary of Navy, 1 July 1903.

In the collection, they practice the most cruel methods, even to cutting off the wings of the birds while they are still alive and turning them loose in that condition. Moreover they cripple thousands of birds that they do not capture, leaving them with broken wings so that they cannot feed themselves and they eventually die along the beach...unless immediate steps are taken to drive them out, within one or two years the birds will be all but exterminated.<sup>403</sup>

As well as writing to the Naval Department directly, Rodman also mobilized ornithologists to raise the issue of Japanese depredations with various arms of government. One of these was William Alanson Bryan, who wrote to the State Department in support of Captain Rodman's campaign for bird protection.<sup>404</sup> Bryan hardly needed any encouragement: he had returned from his expedition to Marcus Island only the previous year, was and was at the time still engaged in supporting Captain Rosehill's campaign to have U.S. sovereignty over the island restored. Bryan in turn enlisted the support of the American Ornithologists' Union, whose chairman wrote to the Naval Secretary begging him to "establish rules and regulations as will prevent the killing and taking of resident birds [on Midway] for commercial purposes, and also to prevent the taking of the eggs of the same birds during the breeding season."<sup>405</sup>

This precipitated a flurry of administrative activity, as different branches of government consulted each other as to what could be done to prevent the Japanese "depredations". The Navy was the most pro-active, likely as a result of Rodman's personal campaigning. In August 1903 it ordered its "commanding officers in Hawaiian waters...to give all the aid

403. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Rodman to Assistant Secretary of Navy, 1st July 1903.

404. HSA Carter bird depredations: Acting Secretary of Interior Department to Governor of Hawaii, 4 November 1904.

405. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: William Dutcher to Naval Secretary, 2 July 1903.

within their power with a view to suppress the destruction of the birds”. But in practice the Navy’s jurisdiction was limited to the island of Midway, and did not extend to the other islands in the group. Governor Dole petitioned the State Department to issue a “proclamation forbidding depredations upon the birds frequenting the islands in question, and the limiting of the collection of bird skins from these islands to American citizens, or residents of Hawaii.”<sup>406</sup> The State Department in turn consulted the Attorney General, repeating Dole’s warning that “unless something is done to prevent such ravages, the fowl will in a few years be destroyed and a source of valuable guano deposits destroyed.”<sup>407</sup> It also suggested that Dole use his own power as governor to introduce legislation prohibiting bird hunting on the islands.<sup>408</sup> But Dole was reluctant to do this - perhaps because he was sensible of the expense that would be occurred attempting to enforce such a law.

Instead, attention focussed on whether the bird hunters could be found to be in violation of existing laws. Rodman had suggested that the Japanese bird hunters were in violation of U.S. law:

inasmuch as there must be some contract entered into by those employed before they sail from Japan, which would be a violation of the Alien Contract Law. Besides, the vessel has never been entered in the U.S. Custom House, so that this would also be a violation of the law, and furthermore, the Quarantine Laws were evidently broken, inasmuch as last year there were fifteen cases of small-pox on Midway, brought or developed there by the Japanese.<sup>409</sup>

406. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Acting Secretary of Interior to Secretary of State, 23 July 1903.

407. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Acting Secretary of State to Attorney General, 28 July 1903.

408. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Acting Secretary of State to Interior Secretary, 15 August 1903.

409. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Rodman to Assistant Secretary of Navy, 1st July 1903.

Dole also advanced a similar legal argument: “these parties coming from Japan on small vessels violate the customs, quarantine and immigration laws in that they introduce laborers into the Territory in all probability under contract.”<sup>410</sup> Eventually, in December 1903, the Treasury hit upon the solution of appointing Rodman as “Inspector of Customs for Midway and the outlying islands, with authority to enforce the customs, quarantine and immigration laws.”<sup>411</sup>

In addition, in 1904 the U.S. Navy billeted an attachment of twenty-five naval marines to Midway, to protect the cable company staff but also to guard against poachers.<sup>412</sup> Midway quickly gained a reputation as the most desolate military posting in the Hawaiian islands. With nothing else to distract them the soldiers and laborers took to gambling their wages in advance, which led to raised tempers and sapped morale.<sup>413</sup> The island was bedeviled by constant sandstorms, which the marines tried to alleviate through a rudimentary terraforming operation, importing soil, grass seeds and trees to plant on the windward side of the island.<sup>414</sup> But the limitations of this attempt to domesticate Midway became apparent the following year when a storm lashed the island, sweeping away all of the marines’ tents and damaging most of the permanent structures. The headline of *The Hawaiian Star* - “MIDWAY

410. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Acting Secretary of Interior to Secretary of State, 23 July 1903.

411. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Rear Admiral Silas Terry to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 18 November 1904.

412. “Iroquois Ordered to Midway: To Reach the Island About Middle of May” *The Hawaiian Gazette*, 20 March 1903.

413. “Gambling Causes Trouble at Midway” *The Hawaiian Star*, 13 January 1905.

414. “To Make Midway an Ocean Park” *The Hawaiian Star*, 9 September 1904.

NEARLY DESTROYED: Terrific Sea Nearly Obliterates Sand Island” - conveyed the palpable fear that the island itself might one day suddenly vanish into the sea.<sup>415</sup>

The marines’ attempts to build permanent fortifications on Midway eventually proved futile. In 1908 the entire detachment would be withdrawn for good. As the *Star* observed, “The guns on Midway are practically useless and there are only twenty Marines stationed there so that as far as any resistance is concerned the force on Midway would have little chance against anything better than a few sampans or a mutinous crew.”<sup>416</sup> Three years beforehand the same paper published a poem composed (it claimed) by anonymous marines stationed there. The poem, which parodies a famous Rudyard Kipling poem, presents a bracing contrast to those Romantic descriptions of island life composed by naturalists like Hugo von Schauinsland (see [Chapter Two](#)):

On the road to old Midway  
Where the coral insects play,  
Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
To be occupied some day.

"Uncle Sam" saw this island,  
A 'floating' so they say,  
And he hitched a cable to it,  
So it couldn't get a away,  
Then he looked the place all over,  
And he sent a cablegram:  
"Send some big Marines to Midway,  
There's toehold in the sand,  
Hanging to a chunk of land,  
With a toe-hold in the sand,  
Would to God, it would grow bigger,  
So we'd have a place to stand.

...

415. “MIDWAY NEARLY DESTROYED: Terrific Sea Nearly Obliterates Sand Island” *The Hawaiian Star*, 30 July 1905.

416. “Midway Marines Recalled” *The Hawaiian Star*, 10 March 1908.

Oh the Island it is sandy,  
And 'tis not a rural scene,  
But they give you emerald glasses,  
Just to make you think it's green,  
...  
I'll be a year on Midway,  
Then a raving maniac,  
And be driven round in Washington,  
In a black asylum hack,  
And I'll think I'm a soaring sea-gull  
Or a pensive albatross,  
And never have the sense to know,  
The sense that I have lost...

### **The Lisianski Incident of 1904**

Midway aside, the challenge of evicting Japanese hunters from the rest of Hawaii's islands was an even more daunting prospect. The islands stretched over thousands of square miles, and were almost entirely uninhabited by any American citizen. It was already evident to U.S. authorities that Midway was not the only island to be targeted by Japanese feather hunters. There was even the possibility that U.S. territorial sovereignty over the islands might be revoked. The previous summer had seen the outbreak of the Marcus Island Incident (see [Chapter One](#)), whose outcome would eventually be decided in favor of Japan.

A broadly similar episode to the Marcus Island Incident had played out on Wake Island, roughly equidistant between Guam and Tokyo. Wake had been claimed as U.S. territory in 1899, shortly after the invasion of the Philippines, as a potential landing station for the Pacific cable. It was eventually rejected in favor of Midway, however, and no attempts were made to settle it. In the summer of 1902 two American ships noticed that a settlement of Japanese had been established on the island, ostensibly for the purposes of "gathering guano

and drying fish”.<sup>417</sup> This prompted a diplomatic exchange between Washington and Tokyo in which the Japanese foreign minister insisted that his government had:

No claim whatever to make on the sovereignty of the island, but that if any subjects are found on the island the Imperial Government expects that they should be properly protected as long as they are engaged in peaceful occupations.<sup>418</sup>

While this statement ostensibly settled the question of which nation exercised territorial sovereignty over Wake, it was at the same time a fairly unambiguous assertion of Japanese citizens’ right to inhabit the islands as long as they were engaged in “peaceable occupations”. This of course was perfectly in line with Tokyo’s insistence that Japanese nationals be permitted to migrate freely to Hawaii and to the continental United States. Japanese occupation of Wake continued: in January 1903 a Navy warship stopped at the island to find fifteen men “engaged in the killing of birds for their feathers and sharks for their fins.”<sup>419</sup>

After the incident on Midway, however, the U.S. government began to argue that bird hunting did not fall within the definition of “peaceable occupations”. The American ambassador to Tokyo wrote to Foreign Minister Komura, explaining that the destruction of birds by Japanese “marauders” was resulting in “unsanitary conditions” that were endangering the new cable station at Midway:

I am directed to bring this matter to the knowledge of Your Excellency, not by way of complaint, inasmuch as the Imperial Government could

417. “Japs Have Island” *Hawaiian Star*, 26 August 1902.

418. “The Marcus Island Case” *New York Times*, 20 August 1902.

419. MOFA 3.5.2.8: Rear Admiral Evans to U.S. Ambassador, Tokyo, 6 January 1903.

According to the captain, the men had been on the island for four months out of a total seven-month stint, and had amassed “about three thousand bird skins”. They claimed to be well supplied with food and tobacco, which would last them until they were due to be collected in a ship sent by their employer. One of the men was, however, suffering from beri-beri.

hardly be held responsible either for the acts of these trespassers or the prevention thereof, but merely for your information, as indicating the desire and purpose of my government to proceed in this matter with due regard for the sensibilities of the Imperial Government and with as little hardship to the marauders as possible.<sup>420</sup>

The ambassador's memorandum combined two separate arguments, an explicit hygienic one and an implicit conservationist one. The hygienic argument was somewhat specious, in that it may have justified evicting Japanese hunters from Midway, where the cable station was in operation, but hardly made sense when applied to uninhabited islands such as Wake. The conservationist argument was hinted at only obliquely, through terms such as "depredation" and "marauder" which, like the adjective "wanton" (another term often deployed by wild bird protectionists) suggest moral disapproval of the killing of birds without pointing to any specific legal infraction. The ambassador was likely aware that there were no specific regulations prohibiting the killing of wild birds on Hawaiian islands. Foreign Minister Komura, for his part, responded to the memorandum noncommittally, merely stating that "the subject has been referred to the Authorities concerned".<sup>421</sup>

Reports continued to circulate of Japanese bird hunters active in the Hawaiian islands. In November 1903, a Japanese schooner of about one hundred tons was sighted off the French Frigate Shoals. Though the ship's captain claimed to be hunting sharks, the Navy believed this to be "a mere pretext, and that the real object of this vessel's presence is the destruction of birds on these islands for their feathers."<sup>422</sup> Dole's successor as Governor of Hawaii wrote to the captain warning him that "the Departments at Washington, including the

420. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midouei' -jima kaichō hokaku kinshi 'Midouei' -jima oyobi sono hoka no Hawai guntō ni okeru honpōjin no kaichō hokaku kinshi ikken: Griscom to Komura, [n.d.] 1903.

421. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midouei' -jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Komura to Griscom, [n.d.] 1903.

422. HSA Carter bird depredations: Terry to Carter, 12 December 1903.

State, Interior and Navy Departments, have taken the attitude that the destruction of birds is in violation of our laws".<sup>423</sup>

In April 1904 the *U.S.S Iroquois* returned to Lisianski to find: "a colony of 77 Japanese engaged in the slaughter of birds. Not having room on board the tug no arrests were made, but they were notified to desist." Yet when the Revenue Cutter *Thetis* returned to Lisianski in June, the cull was still in full swing.

This time, the hunters were brought aboard and taken to Honolulu, but under ambiguous circumstances: had they been arrested or rescued? According to the captain of the *Thetis*, the Japanese on Lisianski were on the verge of starvation, their ship having been wrecked on a reef five months earlier;

[T]hey were very glad to leave the Island, as they had only 600 lbs. of rice and few beans left. They had made preparation for living on dried bird meat and might have had to suffer great hardship if the Schooner failed to arrive and no other rescue had come.<sup>424</sup>

But one newspaper cast doubt on this account, claiming that the hunters were not marooned but had been in contact with another ship, which had already arrived to collect a portion of the bird skins they had processed.<sup>425</sup> The Naval Department in its later correspondence would

423. HSA Carter bird depredations: Carter to the Master of the Schooner "Ada", 14 December 1903.

424. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midouei-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Hamlet to Saitō, 23rd June 1904.

425. "Thetis Visited Many Lone Islands" *Evening Bulletin*, 23 June 1904. In the same article the officers of the *Thetis* also furnished a rather sympathetic account of the Japanese bird-hunting operation, being "of the opinion that the killing was carried on in a more humane manner. They found only one maimed bird. This bird had only one wing, the other having been cut off. This had evidently been done by one of the men in direct disobedience to the manager's orders. Only a very small percentage of birds were allowed to escape in wounded condition." This description contrasts sharply with Rodman's account of bird hunting on Midway the previous year.

insist that the poachers had been arrested, not rescued. The problem was that there was no obvious charge to levy at the hunters, nor any legal basis for deporting them. Without determining by what (if any) contract they had been employed to hunt birds, they could not be shown to have violated immigration law. On being examined by the chief inspector of the immigration service, all but three were allowed to stay in Hawaii, “having signified their willingness to accept employment”.<sup>426</sup> Complicating matters further was matter of the 200,000 processed bird skins, that had not been brought back by the *Thetis* but left behind on Lisianski. The revenue cutter’s captain had left a letter on the island, authorizing the captain of the Japanese schooner that was scheduled to collect the hunters to “take all their catch from the Island and carry it to Japan, with the understanding that no further bird killing should be done on any of the islands by Japanese hereafter.”<sup>427</sup>

The Japanese consul to Honolulu quickly became caught up in the fallout from the Lisianski incident. Consul Saitō Miki had an pivotal, but unenviable, diplomatic role in the Territory of Hawaii. On the one hand he was responsible for defending the rights of Japanese nationals to live and work in Hawaii. On the other he was charged with policing the behavior of said nationals so as to avoid causing international embarrassment to the Empire of Japan. Notwithstanding far-fetched rumors to the effect that the Japanese consul was acting on orders from Tokyo to destabilize Hawaiian labor relations, Saitō was in fact primarily concerned with keeping the peace in Hawaii. He joined with the HSPA in denouncing Japanese on-migration to the continental U.S., urging cane-cutters to instead honor their

426. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Bechtel to Saitō, 24 June 1904. Three of the hunters were diagnosed as suffering from trachoma, however, and therefore found to be in breach of quarantine law.

427. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Hamlet to Consul Saitō, 23 June 1904.

employment contracts and remain on their plantations.<sup>428</sup> When Japanese laborers went on strike, Saitō invariably urged them to return to work. Gary Okihiro goes as far as to claim that the Japanese consul was “united [with Hawaiian labor recruiters and capitalists, and plantation managers in Hawaii] in squeezing sweat and blood from Japanese workers.”<sup>429</sup>

Regardless of how closely Saitō’s class interests aligned with those of capital, it is true that, in urging a “peaceful solution” to labor disputes, he was chiefly concerned with the unfavorable impression that labor militancy gave to foreigners. “Strikes,” he chided, are “by their very nature, like the doings of unruly children or the acts of barbarians”.<sup>430</sup> In other words, industrial action undermined the image of the Japanese as a civilized race; they therefore had the potential to impact (among other things) ongoing negotiations about Japanese immigration rights across the broader Pacific. For the same reasons, Saitō had kept a close eye on the problem of Japanese bird depredations. After the Midway Incident he had written to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, warning of the “unusually furious” coverage that Hawaiian newspapers were devoting to the “cruel behavior” of Japanese hunters, and suggesting that the ministry take anticipatory measures to regulate the hunters and forestall future incidents.<sup>431</sup>

During the Lisianski Incident Consul Saitō was approached by Shugeyo Tsunetato, the foreman of the rescued/arrested bird hunters, who asked for help in protecting the cargo

428. Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Temple: 1992), 28.

429. *Ibid.*, 60.

430. Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 70.

431. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Consul Saitō to Foreign Minister Komura, 30 June 1903.

of bird skins that had been left behind on the island.<sup>432</sup> As the skins were extremely valuable, various enterprising souls in Hawaii quickly set about planning voyages to collect them.

“From a commercial standpoint,” insisted the *Hawaiian Star* slyly, “the skins belong to any free lance that may choose to go after them”.<sup>433</sup> Saitō formally lodged a request, on Shugeyo’s behalf, that the U.S. government “protect the catch from the interference of outsiders.”<sup>434</sup> In the event, it later emerged that another Japanese vessel had indeed returned to Lisianski to collect the skins as scheduled.<sup>435</sup>

On its part, Hawaii’s Inspector of Customs was keen that the Japanese consulate provide compensation for the expense of “transporting” (the term was deliberately ambiguous) the Japanese hunters from Lisianski to Honolulu. He requested that the Japanese government pay the two dollar-per-head tax for the hunters who had chosen to stay in Hawaii, and also bear the cost of repatriating the three men who had been rejected under the quarantine law.<sup>436</sup> Saitō expressed his regret that the Imperial Government was unable to pay this cost directly. But he did promise to “endeavor to arrange for their passage at their own expense.”<sup>437</sup> The Customs inspector next presented Saitō with a bill totaling \$99.20, for the food consumed by the Japanese during their voyage aboard the *Thetis*. This time Saitō forwarded the bill directly to Takahashi Fukijirō, the owner of the Yokohama-based company

432. “Thetis Visited Many Lone Islands.”

433. “Who Owns Those Rich Bird Skins On Lisianski?” *The Hawaiian Star*, 24 June 1904.

434. HSA Carter bird depredations, Terry to Asst. Navy Secretary, 18th November 1904; MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Stackable to Saitō, 20 July 1904

435. “Iroquois Gets Back” *The Hawaiian Star*, 29 September 1905.

436. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Customs Inspector Bechtel to Saitō, 24 June 1904.

437. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Saitō to Bechtel, 27 June 1904.

that had employed the hunters.<sup>438</sup> As far the United States government was concerned, this settled the matter.<sup>439</sup> (Saitō continued to have to deal with the fallout until well into the next year, however, when twenty-five of the bird hunters changed their mind about staying in Hawaii and asked to return to their homeland. Once again, Saitō insisted that Takahashi's company foot the bill for this expense.<sup>440</sup>)

Significantly, the Lisianski dispute was resolved without any direct accusations of poaching being leveled. But over the course of the next year, the U.S. government's attitude hardened, and it became determined that the Lisianski Incident should serve to mark a line in the sand. Part of the credit for this shift in policy can be laid at the door of William Alanson Bryan. In the wake of the Lisianski Incident, Bryan wrote to President Roosevelt personally:

calling attention to the continued destruction of birds on Midway and other islands of the Hawaiian group, and suggesting that a revenue cutter be regularly stationed in Hawaiian waters, with instructions to take trips, biennially, to outlying islands and enforce the Customs Laws, as well as prevent the destruction of bird life on the islands in Hawaiian waters.<sup>441</sup>

Bryan's memorandum had an immediate effect. The Treasury promised to arrange for dispatch of another revenue cutter "for temporary duty, from time to time, in Hawaiian waters, until a new vessel can be procured for regular duty".<sup>442</sup> Copies of Bryan's report were

438. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midoueeii'-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Saitō to Takahashi, 22 September 1904.

439. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midoueeii'-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Acting Inspector of Customs Cullen to Saitō, 6 October 1904.

440. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midoueeii'-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Takahashi to MOFA Commerce Department, 8 December 1905.

441. HSA Carter bird depredations: Acting Treasury Secretary to Interior Secretary, 2 November 1904.

442. HSA Carter bird depredations: Taylor to Interior Secretary, 2 November 1904.

also sent to the Attorney General, the Naval Secretary, to the Interior Secretary, the Agriculture Secretary (who was responsible for management of wild game stocks), and the State Department. This prompted the latter department to take up the issue of bird depredations with the Japanese Foreign Ministry once again, now by unambiguously framing the hunters as poachers. In a November 1904 memorandum to the Interior Ministry, the Acting Secretary of State noted that:

the Japanese government has made no response to our overtures in regard to the deportation of Japanese bird poachers. So far as appears, no exception was taken to the deportation of the Lisianski poachers last year, and the action of the Japanese Consul at Honolulu seems to have had the approval of his Government.<sup>443</sup>

This was technically a mis-statement of the events that had transpired: only three bird hunters had been deported, and for violation of quarantine law rather than for poaching. There was still no law on the books that prohibited bird hunting, either at the Hawaiian or at the federal level. But whether through strategic misrepresentation or an honest misunderstanding, the State Department now began explicitly asking the Japanese government's cooperation in enforcing a hunting ban on Midway and the other Northwest Hawaiian Islands.<sup>444</sup> The U.S. legation in Tokyo even supplied a list of firms known to have been engaged in poaching activities, which the Japanese Foreign Ministry in turn passed onto the Interior Ministry: the aforementioned Takahashi Fukujirō, and another Yokohama-based firm, Kametoki &

443. HSA Carter bird depredations: Acting Secretary of State to Interior Secretary, 3 November 1904.

444. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midouei' -jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Foreign Minister Komura to Interior Minister Akutagawa, 1 February 1905.

Mizutani.<sup>445</sup> (This was the very same Mizutani who, in [Chapter One](#), had previously claimed Marcus Island for the purposes of bird hunting.) The legation scored a diplomatic victory when it received assurances from the Japanese government that it would instruct police forces in Tokyo, Yokohama and Taiwan to “take strict measures to prevent any persons within their respective jurisdictions from infringing the regulations prohibiting such expeditions.”<sup>446</sup>

This diplomatic initiative, in combination with the semi-regular dispatch of revenue cutters to patrol the islands, may have succeeded in deterring future bird hunting expeditions to outlying Hawaiian islands. Of course it is equally possible that by 1905 bird populations on islands like Lisianski and Wake were already so depleted that plumage companies no longer thought it commercially worthwhile to attempt to harvest them. At any rate, after 1905 rather, a new diplomatic consensus was established between the two nations, that Japanese bird-hunting on the islands did not constitute a legitimate form of “peaceable occupation”.

### **Max Schlemmer, “King of Laysan”**

The final push in the effort to protect the wild birds of the western isles played out around Laysan Island. Again, this effort was motivated in large part by concern to protect Laysan’s birds from specifically Japanese depredations. Significantly, events played out at a time when American anxiety about Japanese racial encroachment was near its height: two years after the California immigration crisis, and the same year that strikes by Japanese plantation workers brought a large part of Hawaii’s economy to a standstill. At the same time, the machinations of a non-Japanese, Max Schlemmer, also played a central role.

445. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: United States Legation, Tokyo, Memorandum 20 January 1905.

446. HSA Carter bird depredations: Komura to Griscom, 21 February 1905.

Max Schlemmer was a classic middle ground figure, a man who thrived at the interstices of state sovereignty in a rapidly globalizing world. He was also a character of Conradian proportions. Schlemmer was born in Alsace in 1856, but left home at the age of fifteen bound for the United States. Within a few months of arriving in America he had found work on a whaler out of New England, bound for the seas off Greenland. He then spent the greater part of the next two decades working as a crewman aboard various whaling vessels criss-crossing the Pacific.<sup>447</sup> Eventually he became a fixture in the small German community based on Kauai, and in 1890, the year the Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Co. was founded, he approached its board of directors claiming to have lived on Laysan Island for a while five years previously. On the basis of his claim to squatters rights, he succeeded in negotiating a royalty from the mine's guano sales that amounted to, on average, about \$1,600 per year.<sup>448</sup> Much later it would emerge that Schlemmer, though he had seen much of the watery part of the world, had never actually set foot on Laysan before that point.<sup>449</sup>

In 1893 Schlemmer served briefly as a captain in the Honolulu Police, helping Queen Liliuokalani's royalist government in its attempt to prevent a coup by American Annexationists. The coup succeeded, the Republic of Hawaii was established, and Schlemmer decided to accept a job as foreman on the Laysan guano mine. For the next six years, the period in which the Laysan mine transformed from a financial debacle into a profit-making venture, Schlemmer worked supervising the Japanese guano diggers under the authority of Captain (or "Governor") Spencer. In 1899, shortly after Annexation, he left Laysan and returned to

447. Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.1 Unger was Schlemmer's grandson.

448. HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co.

449. Star Bulletin Printing House, *Sales Builder* (Honolulu, January 1939) cited in Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.2

Honolulu to apply for American citizenship. Schlemmer and Spencer had a falling out, and Schlemmer decided to quit his job on Laysan and return to Honolulu, not least so as to apply for American citizenship. It proved to be an adroit career move. When the 1900 riot broke out on Laysan in his absence, the PGCF's directors surmised that Schlemmer's handling of the Japanese labor force might have had much to do with the mine's smooth operation in previous years. On 19th September 1900, two weeks after news of the riot broke in Honolulu, the board rehired him to replace Spencer - this time as general manager on the island.

The Hawaiian press were fascinated by Schlemmer and his exploits. There was the fact that he was accompanied on Laysan by his wife and eleven children (see [Figure 3.3](#)) and that he was known to take a keen amateur interest in the birdlife on the island.<sup>450</sup> In 1903 the *Iroquois* stopped off at Laysan on its return journey from Midway and Lisianski, and Captain Rodman pronounced that "every thing was in fine condition. He was much pleased with the method taken by Max Schlemmer to protect the Guano birds. None of these birds are allowed to be slaughtered. In consequence the birds are on the island in vast number."<sup>451</sup> Only under Schlemmer's beneficent rule, it seemed, were Hawaii's native birds safe from Japanese incursion.

The press swiftly anointed Schlemmer as "King of Laysan".<sup>452</sup> Of course it was meant half in jest. By the turn of the 20th century, every right-thinking citizen of the United States knew that kingship, as a formal concept at least, had been consigned to the dustbin of history. The white community in Hawaii knew this particularly well - had not the Kingdom of

450. "Princess of Laysan and Olson's Disaster."

451. "Exterminated Midway Island."

452. "The King of Laysan: His Majesty here for a short stay"; *The Hawaiian Star*, 29 July 1901. In fact had already conferred this title on his predecessor, Captain Spencer, before his ill-fated reign was cut short.

Hawaii, just a few years earlier, been absorbed peacefully by the civilizing power of the Republic? Then again, the name was only partly a joke. The inhabitants of the scattered Hawaiian archipelago also understood better than most that remoteness confers a high degree of autonomy. The precedent of the 1900 riot also led them to surmise that use of force on Laysan Island would likely go unpunished. *The Hawaiian Star* described:

the Schlemmer family and its horde of workers. King Schlemmer, who not only owns the Laysan Island, but the Liciansko [stet] Isle, several hundred miles away to the southward, is the supreme being of his little kingdom. His Japanese workmen must obey his command, lest they be deported or, under rarer circumstances, shot to death, which in the latter event is looked upon as a justifiable act, although the Laysan monarch is under the indirect control of the United States.<sup>453</sup>

In other words, if Schlemmer did not possess absolute sovereignty over Laysan, then he at least was recognized to exercise a considerable suzerainty.

Schlemmer's aura of authority was heightened even further when, in 1904, the Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Co. decided to close down their operation on Laysan. Since 1900 the guano mine had come to be known as "Wilcox's folly", a reference to the president of Hackfeld & Co. who had originally financed the venture.<sup>454</sup> The most accessible guano had already been mined and Hackfeld, the parent company, had made the decision to transition into the more profitable sector of chemical fertilizer manufacturing. Rising costs, not least on labor, also undermined the operation's profitability.<sup>455</sup> Six years remained on the company's

453. "Princess of Laysan and Olson's Disaster."

454. Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.7

455. HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co. In the years 1896-1899, the company extracted on average 2,565 lbs of guano for every dollar spent on labor. For the period 1901-1903 this figure dropped to 1,671 lbs.

leasehold on Laysan (which also included Lisianski Island), and the board of directors decided to sell it to Schlemmer outright for the sum of \$1,750.<sup>456</sup>

After taking up the leasehold, Schlemmer initially derived his main income from continuing to work Laysan's guano deposits. But he had greater ambitions for his dominion. In December 1904, shortly after the removal of the seventy-seven Japanese poachers from Lisianski, Schlemmer wrote to Governor Carter, requesting that he be granted a ninety-nine year lease for Laysan, Lisianski and the French Frigate Shoals. In return he would protect the birds on the islands, but receive a license to harvest a certain number (he judged 21,800 per season to be sustainable) which he would turn over to the Territorial Government to sell. Carter's reply was not promising. His request would be referred to the Interior Department in Washington for consideration, but:

I am at a loss to know how many birds it would probably be safe to kill without affecting their numbers...One suggestion you make it seems to me not at all practicable - that the Territorial Government go into the question of the sale of birds. The policy of the Territorial should be, I believe, to keep out of business.<sup>457</sup>

The next year Schlemmer's financial position worsened drastically when the ship he used for ferrying guano was wrecked on a reef off Midway Island. Schlemmer and his crew were lucky to escape with their lives, especially as Schlemmer could not swim.<sup>458</sup> He wrote a disgruntled letter to Prince Kalaniana'ole, Hawaii's delegate to Congress, asking for help securing an appointment as police warden of the Northwestern Isles:

As I have a family of eleven children and have had very bad luck for the last four years by losing my own and one chartered schooner, and as

456. MOFA 3.5.8.2 'Midoueeii'-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi, 361.

457. HSA: Carter to Schlemmer, 23 December 1904.

458. "The King of Laysan Wrecked" *The Hawaiian Star*, 20 March 1905.

the government was so good to the Japanese people when they lost their schooner in 1904 and made them a present with all the birds they had stolen to the amount of \$65,000, at Lisianski, which island was leased to me at the time; I should think they can do something for an American citizen who has always been a friend to Navy and Army people and also to scientific people all over the Globe...<sup>459</sup>

In 1907 Schlemmer was briefly drawn into a consortium that hoped to exploit Laysan's bird population with government backing. The ring-leader of the scheme was a man named Atkinson, a long-term Hawaiian resident who was serving as Acting Governor during the interim between Carter's departure and the arrival of a new governor from the mainland. Atkinson had first been inspired to pursue this venture in 1904, in the wake of the Lisianski Incident, openly holding talks with Shugeyo, foreman of the Japanese bird hunters:

to see if the islands cannot be made a source of a large revenue to the territory.... The federal government seems to intend to do nothing in the matter and there is no reason why the territory should not lease the bird killing privileges to such persons as have the enterprise to go there. The birds would of course be protected from extermination and that at present seems to be the only fate in store for them.<sup>460</sup>

Schlemmer was initially enthusiastic about the scheme. This, after all, had been his plan all along. But he discovered to his horror that the Territorial Government officially considered that his leasehold on the island to be null and void. The consortium planned to lease the islands anew, and was inviting him to participate in merely a managerial capacity. For the King of Laysan, the prospect of being demoted to his former role as foreman of a Japanese labor gang was not appetizing, and Schlemmer parted company with the consortium on bitter terms: later, he would accuse them of conspiring with Japanese bird poachers, including a

459. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Schlemmer to Kalani-anaole, [undated]

460. *Hawaiian Star*, "To Lease Lisiansky", 29th June 1904.

number of his own guano miners, in a far-fetched scheme to poison his entire family so as to pillage Laysan's birds.<sup>461</sup>

In the event, nothing ever came of Atkinson's scheme, which seems to have met with disapproval from both the incoming Governor Frear and the U.S. consul in Yokohama.<sup>462</sup> But his entanglement with the consortium did make Schlemmer realize that his legal standing was much weaker than he had previously realized. Though he still hoped to defend his right to the leasehold through the courts if necessary, there were in any case only three years left before it expired. Schlemmer proceeded to leverage his dwindling position with audacity. In May 1907, he finally received his coveted commission as police constable "within the district of Honolulu and the western [island] group". The position was without pay, and explicitly stated that the authority granted to him was primarily for the protection of birds. Undaunted, Schlemmer announced the following April that he was to construct a tannery on Laysan, ostensibly for the purpose of processing the skins of rabbits that he had released to breed on the island.<sup>463</sup>

In December 1908 Schlemmer made his boldest play. He travelled to Japan, taking with him his police constable's commission and the leasehold sold to him by the Pacific Guano & Fertilizer Co. In Tokyo, he signed a series of contracts with one Yamanouchi Genkichi, owner of a deep-sea fishing company. One was a license, by which Schlemmer

461. HSA Frear bird depredations: Schlemmer testimony, 8 July 1908 .

462. The American vice-consul in Yokohama also reported being approached in September 1907 by "an American citizen [who] stated that he had been asked by a certain Japanese to prepare a similar power of attorney, to be authenticated before the American Consul-General, and which would seem to grant the holders some authority for their presence on the bird islands of the Hawaiian group." The vice-consul took a dim view of the suggestion, and recommended further revenue cutter tours of the islands to protect. HSA Frear bird depredations, 1907-: Vice-Consul-General to Assistant Secretary of State, 6 February 1909.

463. *Evening Bulletin*, 23 April 1908 cited in Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.11.

appointed Yamanouchi “as my agent to conduct the Guano Business etc. etc., for me at Laysan Island and Lisianski Island.”<sup>464</sup> In a separate, more detailed contract, Schlemmer passed on to Yamanouchi the agents’ commission he had purchased from the PGFC, granting Yamanouchi “the privilege of securing phosphate guano, and any products of whatever nature in and from the Islands.” Schlemmer also undertook to use his police constable’s commission for the purpose of “overseeing any other people who would come to the said Islands and impinge [Yamanouchi’s] privilege”. In return, Yamanouchi would pay Schlemmer one hundred and fifty dollars per month for a period of fifteen years.<sup>465</sup> In another letter, Schlemmer clarified that he would receive the hundred and fifty dollars per month “in case only and from the date I myself secures [sic] a lease for the Islands of Laysan and Lisianski from the Hawaiian government.” This letter also contained the only explicit reference to the bird hunting which both parties surely knew was Yamanouchi’s primary commercial motivation, in that Schlemmer recognized “the capture of the birds by yourself on the said Islands [of Laysan and Lisianski]”<sup>466</sup>

### **The United States versus Max Schlemmer**

News of Schlemmer’s trip to Japan soon circulated, and triggered outrage in the American media. On 9th January 1909 the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the same paper which had spearheaded the anti-Japanese movement in California, reported that:

464. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Max Schlemmer, “License”, 22 December 1908.

465. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Schlemmer and Yamanouchi, “Agreement”, 22 December 1908.

466. MOFA 3.5.8.2 ‘Midouei’-jima kaichō hokaku kinshi: Schlemmer to Yamanouchi, 22 December 1908.

Max Schlemmer, known as the ‘King of Laysan Island’, has just returned from Japan where it is understood that he has made arrangements with a firm of Japanese to sell them the guano, still to be secured on the island, but more important still, to sell them the plumage of the birds which in millions frequent this island. . . As all of these shoals and low islands belong to the United States these birds catchers are poachers [sic] and though once or twice schooners and crews engaged in the business have been overhauled by revenue cutters, the business continues. Plans now, however, are for the bird catchers to go to Laysan under the authority of Captain Schlemmer’s lease.<sup>467</sup>

The incident also made the pages of the *New York Times*, and from there garnered the attention of William Dutcher, then president of the National Union of Audubon Societies. Dutcher promptly sent the *Times* clipping to his old colleague William Alanson Bryan, who happened to be in Washington D.C. at the time. Bryan in turn forwarded Dutcher’s letter to the State Department, hand delivering it to Foggy Bottom.<sup>468</sup> This set off a panic within the Federal Government, compounded by uncertainty as to whether Schlemmer’s contract had any legal basis and, if so, what could steps could be taken to overrule it. On 3 February 1909, Theodore Roosevelt’s last day in office, the Interior Secretary submitted a memorandum suggesting that to the president use his executive power to declare the Hawaiian islands a refuge for “native birds...reserving them for public use” Roosevelt signed Executive Order 1019 into law the same day, creating the Hawaiian Islands Reservation.<sup>469</sup> (See [Figure 3.4](#)) A few days later, whilst still unaware of Roosevelt’s executive order, Governor Frear issued Schlemmer with his long-coveted lease extension to Laysan and Lisianski. Like the earlier

467. San Francisco Chronicle, 9 January 1909, cited in HSA Frear Bird Depredations: “Memorandum in re Occupation of Laysan Island”.

468. HSA Frear bird depredations, State Department Chief Clerk to Bryan, 13 January 1909.

469. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Dennett to Interior Secretary, 3rd February 1909; Executive Order 1019.

police warden's commission issued by the High Sheriff of Hawaii, however, it explicitly instructed Schlemmer "not to permit the removal or destruction of birds".<sup>470</sup>

Over the following year, newspapers began reporting that Japanese vessels had resumed their visits to the Hawaiian Islands. Interestingly, the bird hunting expeditions seem to have resumed prior to Schlemmer's trip to Tokyo. On 1 December 1909 the Hawaiian Gazette reported that "Japanese poachers [were] stripping the small islands between here and the Midway, of birds".<sup>471</sup> The *Chūgai Shōgyō Shimpō*, a Tokyo newspaper, revealed that at least seven different Japanese ships had visited Laysan during the winter bird hunting season of October 1908 to January 1909, reporting that "coolies are crowded on this small island as thickly as spectators at a fire...it is feared that business rivalry may bring them to quarreling". According to the newspaper, the boats belonged to a variety of different operators, including "the people of Okinawa Prefecture" and "the people of the Ogasawara Islands".<sup>472</sup> Later, the Japanese authorities would determine that Yamanouchi had decided to subcontract the rights granted him by Schlemmer to yet another person, Hatoyama Kan'ichi, owner of a firm called

470. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: "Hawaiian Islands Reservation - Memorandum" (n.d.)

471. *Hawaiian Gazette*, "Jap Poachers on Islands to Windward", 1 December 1909

472. *Chūgai Shimpō* "Expedition of Japanese Sailing Vessels to Secure Feathers", 29 March 1909 cited in NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Poaching of Japanese on bird islands of Hawaiian group, 3 April 1909.

the Japan Fishing Co.<sup>473</sup> It is likely that shortly after this, the winter season of 1908-9 devolved into something of a free-for-all, even if it had not been one already.<sup>474</sup>

Reports of bird depredations continued to reach the American authorities. In March 1909 the cable station superintendent reported that a Japanese schooner stopped at Midway for general repairs: “Think intends to take guano Laysan, fish Johnson, and other islands.”<sup>475</sup> In October that same year a Japanese sampan was spotted anchored five miles off the coast of Bird Island, purpose unknown.<sup>476</sup> A Captain F.D. Walker, who claimed to be familiar with the western Hawaiian Isles, wrote in to the *Honolulu Sunday Advertiser* condemning:

what I see to be a disgrace to a civilized power, in allowing Japanese year after year to destroy the ocean sea birds... It is all very well issuing a proclamation that the islands above mentioned are the sole property of Uncle Sam and no one must kill any birds, etc etc. Bah! ....Just imagine for a moment Kaiser William or Edward the Seventh permitting such atrocities to be continued year after year on their domains - but don't imagine, it is too absurd for imagination!<sup>477</sup>

The apoplectic sea captain had put his finger on an uncomfortable truth: the U.S. government was once again struggling to respond to this renewed influx of bird hunters. The revenue cutter *Thetis* was at the time deployed in Alaskan waters, and could not be requis-

473. Japanese: *Nihon Gyogyō Kabushiki Gaisha*. See FOMA Midoweei: Hatoyama to Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce Marine Products Department, 28 February 1910; Governor of Kanagawa to Foreign Minister Komura, 17 March 1910.

474. An alternative possibility is that Yamanouchi was rightly doubtful that his contract with Schlemmer would prove enforceable in the long-term, and so came to an arrangement with other bird hunting companies to jointly harvest Laysan's bird population as swiftly as possible.

475. G.V. Meyer to unknown, 31 March 1909.

476. HSA Frear bird depredations: Stackable to Frear, 7 October 1909.

477. *The Honolulu Sunday Advertiser*, “Slaughtering the Sea Birds”, 24 October 1909.

tioned for duty in Hawaii until November 1909 at the earliest.<sup>478</sup> The Department of Labor and Commerce declined the Interior Secretary's request that it despatch one of its lighthouse tenders to inspect the western isles, citing budgetary constraints.<sup>479</sup> The State Department also resumed its diplomatic initiative, hoping to pressure the Japanese government to take action to rein in the bird hunters. The U.S. ambassador to Tokyo informed the Foreign Minister Komura of the establishment of the Hawaiian Islands Reservation.<sup>480</sup> The Japanese Interior Ministry duly passed on the news, instructing coastal authorities to warn Japanese ships of a heightened risk of arrest for poaching in Hawaiian territory.<sup>481</sup> The Foreign Ministry also published a notice to this effect in its Commercial Journal, and arranged for similar announcements in Japanese newspapers, including the Honolulu-based *Hawai Shimpō*.<sup>482</sup>

The *Thetis* eventually reached Laysan in January 1910, promptly arresting twenty-three Japanese and seizing the birds' wings they had processed.<sup>483</sup> It also confiscated the Schlemmer-Yamanouchi contract, presented by the hunters' foreman as proof that they were operating on the island legitimately. *The Hawaiian Star* took a sympathetic view toward the captured Japanese, painting them of pawns of nefarious Japan-based commercial interests: "It may go hard with them for what they've done, but it appears that they were but the tools of a great company, whose headquarters is in Japan and which has agents in Hawaii." The real

478. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Acting Treasury Secretary to Interior Secretary, 23 July 1909.

479. Territories Bird Reservations: Acting Secretary of Labor and Commerce to Interior Secretary, 4 August 1909.

480. MOFA Midowei: MOFA Commerce Dept to Assistant Foreign Minister, 27 January 1910.

481. MOFA Midowei: "Hawai guntō ni okeru kaitō micchō ni kan suru ken," 467

482. MOFA Midowei: MOFA to U.S. Ambassador, 26 January 1910; *Hawai Shimpō*, "Dōhō gyogyōsha e chūi", 26 October 1909.

483. "Poachers Brought by Thetis: Max Schlemmer Thought To Be In Poaching Deal" *Hawaiian Star*, 2 February 1910.

villain of the piece though, was Schlemmer: “A Honolulu man, a white man, is supposed to know all about their business and he will have much to explain if not to answer for.”<sup>484</sup>

The United States government was also determined to make an example of the King of Laysan. A federal grand jury arraigned him on two counts of poaching from a federal reservation and bringing aliens into the country unlawfully. Twelve of the captured Japanese were used as witnesses against him. But the prosecution soon found itself bogged down in a legal morass. It was discovered that Roosevelt’s order authorizing the creation of the Hawaiian Islands Reservation rested on dubious constitutional grounds, with a government memo admitting that “Congress has since attacked the proposition that the President has the power to reserve public lands for such purposes”.<sup>485</sup> Neither could Schlemmer be prosecuted under the laws of the Territory of Hawaii, as there was no specific anti-poaching law on the books that covered the Northwest Hawaiian Islands.

Schlemmer for his part was utterly unrepentant. He admitted the government’s charge that the Japanese were his employees but insisted that they “were not poachers....They were there after guano and killed a few birds on the side.” The government’s persecution of him, he alleged, was punishment for his decision to sell on his rights to Laysan and Lisianski to a Japanese national. As proof of this he cited a conversation with Governor Frear in May 1909, in which he claimed Frear told him:

‘I hear you made a contract with Japanese.’

I replied that I had, for the purpose of getting guano - and then he stated that he thought that my lease on the island would have to be

484. *Ibid.*

485. NARA-II MD, Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: “Hawaiian Islands Reservation - Memorandum” (n.d.)

cancelled, because it had been made a bird reservation by the President of the United States.<sup>486</sup>

Schlemmer may have misremembered his exchange with Frear, or even fabricated it completely. (He had a track record of being creative with the facts, to say the least.) But his claim has the ring of truth to it. Ever since the first reports of bird culls on otherwise uninhabited Hawaiian islands, the U.S. government had been exercised by the fact the “depredations” occurred specifically at the hands of Japanese nationals. The panic about Japanese bird “poachers” also occurred against a background of widespread white anxiety about Japanese migration into American territory and encroachment into economic activities that were properly felt to be the preserve of American citizens. The crackdown on Japanese bird-hunting can be seen as part of a broader effort to exclude Japanese from the political and economic life of the Territory of Hawaii.

Eventually, the prosecution failed to convict Schlemmer either on the charge of poaching or on illegal employment of foreign labor. Interestingly, the Hawaii district court judge accepted the defense’s argument that the Hawaiian Islands Reservation, even if constitutional, only provided protection for “native birds”; whereas the prosecution had failed to provide any evidence as to whether the birds killed on Laysan were native or not.<sup>487</sup> Formally at least, Schlemmer was exonerated. But it was a pyrrhic victory: the trial had exhausted his finances, and the Territory of Hawaii was able to cite Roosevelt’s executive order as grounds for annulling the lease extension it had granted him. As one newspaper put it wryly, “King Max of Laysan is Deposed”:

486. “Schlemmer Says Fear Cause of Trouble” *Honolulu Evening Bulletin*, 3 February 1910.

487. *Reports of Causes Determined in the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii: November 3, 1906 - March 30, 1911* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1911), 551.

There has been no revolt among the subjects of King Max. His rule has been mild and beneficent and his people have always been well-satisfied. It is only a case of a stronger power stepping in and taking away his land. The U.S. government is the power that has deposed the King of Laysan and annexed his country.<sup>488</sup>

### **Conserving Nature and Sovereignty on Laysan and Midway**

In the aftermath of the Schlemmer trial, the Federal Government set about attempting to transform the Hawaiian Islands Reservation from a constitutionally dubious proclamation into an operational wildlife reserve. Prominent in this effort was William Alanson Bryan, the ornithologist who had campaigned so vigorously against Japanese bird hunting over the course of the previous decade. In 1911 Bryan participated in an expedition to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, which had been charged with administering it. The expedition generated much publicity that served to present the islands as specifically American space - “Uncle Sam’s great ocean bird reserve”, as one newspaper put it. (See [Figure 3.5](#)). The expedition aimed first of all to survey the islands’ wildlife, partly as to determine which of its fauna could be classified as “native”. Given the fiasco of the Schlemmer trial, this was a matter of pressing legal importance if future poachers were to be successfully prosecuted.

Secondly, the USDA expedition tried to help the island’s ecology recover from the impact of Japanese hunting, but also of human occupation more generally. In the previous chapter, we saw how ornithologists used specific techniques such as fieldwork, taxidermy and diorama to produce representations of Laysan as uninhabited wilderness space. Now they engaged in the inverse process, deploying their scientific expertise to return the island to what they judged to be a true State of Nature. Once again, Schlemmer was cast as the villain. Aside

488. “King Max of Laysan is Deposed” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 11 November 1909.

from the large-scale bird culls that had taken place with or without his connivance, during his time on the island the King of Laysan had undertaken various initiatives to modify his domain for human habitation. These included planting coconut palms (which had actually been stipulated as a condition of his leasehold), and also releasing pigs and rabbits to breed on the island as a food source.<sup>489</sup> The USDA expedition viewed these latter introductions as a menace to the “native” bird population, and so a new cull commenced on Laysan, this time of the island’s “invasive” species. (The practice of wildlife conservation invariably prioritizes conserving the wild over conserving life as such.) Unfortunately the expedition exhausted its supplies of shotgun ammunition before it was able to wipe out the last remaining rabbits, so the cull was essentially fruitless.<sup>490</sup>

Twelve years later, a second expedition succeeded in eliminating rabbits from Laysan.<sup>491</sup> Since then, various government agencies have sporadically intervened to fulfill the American mandate of nature conservation on the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. Most recently President George W. Bush, almost one hundred years exactly after Roosevelt first proclaimed the reserve, expanded it into a broader marine park encompassing some 850,000 square kilometers of ocean in which “fishing, mining, oil exploration or other commercial activity” would be limited so as to protect a “unique habitat to hundreds of rare species of birds and fish”.<sup>492</sup> Like Roosevelt, Bush issued his executive order as he left office, using the authority

489. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Depredations: “Memorandum for the Chief Clerk”, 27 October 1909; Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.11.

490. UHM William Alanson Bryan collection, Laysan field diary 1911; *Ibid.* Ch.13.

491. Storrs L. Olson, “History and Ornithological Journals of the Tanager Expedition of 1923 to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, Johnston and Wake Islands,” *Atoll Research Bulletin* 433(1996) 29-30, 48, 55.

492. John M. Broder, “Bush to Protect Vast New Pacific Tracts” *New York Times*, 5 January 1909.; Alison Rieser, “The Papahānaumokuākea Precedent: Ecosystem-Scale Marine Protected Areas in the Eez,” *Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal* 13:2(2012)

granted him by the 1906 National Antiquities Act. This allowed him to burnish his (distinctly checkered) environmental legacy without needing to consult Congress or other stakeholders.<sup>493</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the effectiveness of these interventions, even if we were to use a metric that equates conserving the islands' bird population with conserving wild Nature. But a couple of observations are merited. The first is that the apparent decline in the number of visits by Japanese bird hunters to the islands cannot necessarily be attributed to American deterrence. After the outbreak of World War I, global plumage markets collapsed, never to recover - for reasons that will be explored in [Chapter Five](#). The commercial incentive to mount expeditions to remote bird islands therefore dwindled correspondingly.

Secondly, the albatross population on the island of Midway provides a useful control study against which to gauge the impact of bird conservation efforts. As an operational cable station and U.S. military base, Midway was not included within the newly established Hawaiian Islands Reservation. In fact the Navy had harbored concerns about Midway's bird life from the very beginning of its occupation of the island, warning in 1903 that "it might be necessary to prevent the birds from breeding on account of the filth deposited there by them."<sup>494</sup> In the interwar period, Midway became a way-station on Pan American Airlines' flying clipper service, and the island's albatrosses subsequently became a minor tourist attraction. (Passengers stopping off on the island would stay at a hotel called the Gooneyville Lodge.) Shortly before Pearl Harbor, however, the U.S. military began transforming Midway

493. *Ibid.*, 230.

494. NARA-II MD Territories Office, Hawaii, Bird Reservations: Navy Bureau of Equipment Chief R.B. Bradford to Secretary of the Navy, 6 July 1903.

into a naval air station. In the process “almost the entire surface of the island was either smoothed for roads, paved for runway, excavated for bunkers, or covered by buildings and dumps.”<sup>495</sup> The Navy also became concerned about the risk of plane crashes caused by bird strike, and embarked on a systematic attempt to eradicate Midway’s albatross population. Remarkably, this effort was unsuccessful: according to one source, “Marines and construction men armed with two-by-fours clubbed thousands to death - with almost no effect upon the population”.<sup>496</sup> By the end of the Pacific War there were still some 163,000 albatrosses nesting on the island. Even without the aid of human-directed conservation efforts, albatross populations are sometimes capable of remarkable resilience.<sup>497</sup>

Finally, a brief postscript to the story of the King of Laysan. In 1915, Max Schlemmer was in fact able to return to Laysan once more, when the U.S. Navy agreed to appoint him as a warden for the Hawaiian Islands Reservation. Given Schlemmer’s previous track record, one can imagine there must have been a dearth of applicants for the job. History repeated itself however, this time as farce. After the outbreak of World War I a rumor started to circulate that the nefarious Schlemmer might be a German sleeper agent, posted on Laysan with a wireless radio to monitor shipping lanes.<sup>498</sup> There was some irony in this accusation, as few people had demonstrated their distaste for German militarism more manifestly than Max Schlemmer, who had left his homeland of Alsace at the very moment it was invaded in the Franco-Prussian War. Nevertheless, in December 1915 a U.S. warship stopped at Laysan and informed the Schlemmers that they were a security risk, and were to be removed from the

495. W. Lance N. Tickell, *Albatrosses* (Mountfield: Pica Press, 2000), 206-207.

496. Harvey I. Fisher, “Populations of Birds on Midway and the Man-Made Factors Affecting Them,” *Pacific Science* 3(April 1949), 105.

497. *Ibid.*, 109.

498. Unger, *Max Schlemmer*, Ch.14.

island immediately.<sup>499</sup> Thus was the King of Laysan's checkered reign finally overthrown.

Max ended his days as a janitor working in the Honolulu office of Hackfeld & Co.<sup>500</sup>

499. SIA: Schlemmer family papers.

500. *Ibid.*, Ch.16.

## 4. Fertile Archipelago

### The Rasa Island Phosphate Company and the Political Economy of Guano

*Rasa Island: an example of ecological imperialism?*

*A Potted History of Japanese Fertilizer, Yayoi-Edo*

*A Pedological Paradigm Shift: Max Fesca vs the Ronō Agronomists*

*Tsunetō Noritaka's search for guano*

*The Rasa Island Phosphate Company*

*The Political Economy of a Phosphate Glut*

*Tabula Rasa: The Impossibility of a Birds-Eye View of History*

The previous two chapters described the island of Laysan's transformation from unpeopled atoll to operational guano mine and back again. This chapter describes a similar trajectory that played out on another slab of rock jutting out from the Pacific Ocean. The island that would become formally known as Okidaitōjima lies some four hundred kilometers southeast of Okinawa's main island, over a thousand kilometers from mainland Japan. Like Laysan, it is barely a square kilometer in surface area. And as on Laysan, the accumulated evidence suggests that for thousands of years before it was sighted by human eyes, great flocks of seabirds must have whirled and circled above it, voiding their bowels. It was possibly known to maritime traders who voyaged between the Ryūkyū Kingdom and Southeast Asia, but its recorded history begins on 25th September 1543, when the explorer Bernardo de la Torre

sighted it midway through an abortive attempt to reach New Spain from the Philippines.<sup>501</sup> He thought not much more of it than that it was of negligible use as a harbor, and in fact posed something of a danger to shipping. "*Mal abrigo*", he wrote: poor shelter. By the nineteenth century, Spanish navigators, similarly dismissive of the island, had given it another name, one that stuck: *Isla Rasa*, meaning flat or blank island.<sup>502</sup>

It took a commercial and technological revolution before human eyes could discern value in Rasa's blankness. The first necessary condition for this revolution was the growth of a global market in guano phosphate fertilizer from the mid-19th century, as described in [Chapter One](#). Another was the intensifying commercialization of Japanese agriculture in the years following the Meiji Restoration. Last but not least was the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce's efforts to promote an understanding of Justus von Liebig's theory of soil chemistry among farmers. Together, these shifts transformed the island's accumulation of calcified bird shit from a shipping hazard into a natural resource. When the Japanese pedologist and entrepreneur Tsunetō Noritaka set foot on Rasa in the spring of 1911, he saw not a barren rock but a "virgin island" from which both private and public profit might be hewn.<sup>503</sup> Over the course of the next thirty-four years, Tsunetō's Rasa Phosphate Mining Company developed Okidaitōjima into Japan's largest guano mine, with a peak

501. The Ryukyuan Kingdom was in contact with Siam, Java, Malacca and Sumatra from as early as the fifteen century. Takara Kurayoshi, *Ajia no naka no Ryūkyū Ōoku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998), 71, 95.

502. Welsch, "Was Marcus Island Discovered By Bernardo De La Torre in 1543?" 109-122, 122.

503. Noritaka Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island* (Tokyo: 1920), 8.

population of over two thousand laborers and a production capacity of over 180,000 tons per year.<sup>504</sup>

During the same period, the tiny speck of rock was transformed first into a vital source of a strategic raw material, and then into a defensive stepping stone in the Pacific theater of World War II, until it would eventually come to be commemorated in veterans' memoirs as a far-flung piece of Japan's national territory<sup>505</sup>. This chapter traces the inter-relationship between two processes: the establishment and operation of the phosphate mine on Rasa, and the formation of a discourse of resource scarcity at the national level. Tsunetō Noritaka's life work lay at the intersection between these two processes. As a government-appointed scientist, he quantified, publicized and prescribed the remedy for (what he discerned to be) a gaping phosphate nutrient deficit within Japanese agriculture. Later, as a private industrialist, he made the strategic case for the Japanese state to protect domestic phosphate fertilizer manufacturers against foreign competition. More than any other individual, Tsunetō transformed the concept of soil fertility into a matter of Japan's national survival, and thus into an object of statecraft.

### **Rasa Island: an example of ecological imperialism?**

The history of the global guano economy has recently begun to receive sustained scholarly attention, with a broad consensus emerging that it represents an instance of both capitalist and imperialist expansion by European states and their imitators. Much of this recent scholarship

504. *Ibid.*, 25; Kumazawa Kikuo, "Tsunetō Noritaka to Nihon no rinsan shigen," *Hiryō Kagaku* 6(1983), 58-59. By way of comparison, the workforce on Laysan Island (see [Chapter Two](#)) rarely reached one hundred, and output was never more than five thousand tons per year. See HSA M-476 Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co.: "Laysan Island Statement".

505. Japanese: *kokudo* 国土.

has not only emphasized the negative environmental impact of guano mining, but has linked this negative environmental impact to the exploitation of laborers and indigenes. Gregory Clark and John Bellamy Foster draw on Marx' theory of metabolic rift and Alfred Crosby's theory of ecological imperialism to argue that capitalist modes of agriculture led to soil depletion in the European metropole, causing an "environmental overdraft" that farmers sought to service by importing commercial fertilizer from Latin America, "imperialistically drawing on the natural resources of the periphery".<sup>506</sup> They then go on to describe the various ramifications of the global guano trade, ranging from the mass-importation of indentured laborers from Asia to the "degradation of the Peruvian/Chilean environment" to the various wars fought between Latin American states for control over the guano islands.

Regardless of whether all of these things necessarily stemmed inexorably from the simple choice to mine guano for sale, what is interesting about this analysis is that it is rooted in a Malthusian assumption that soil is a natural resource possessing finite fertility. For instance, the authors cheerfully acknowledge their debt to the soil scientist and German nationalist Justus von Liebig, who accused Victorian Britain of "hanging like a vampire on the breast of Europe, and even the world, sucking its lifeblood without any real necessity or permanent gain for itself." In a similar vein, Clark and Bellamy Foster write that:

506. Clark, "Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift," 311. Ted Melillo also shows how Peruvian and Chilean guano mines relied first on indentured laborers sourced from Qing China, and later on heavily indebted peasants recruited from the Latin American interior: the "first Green Revolution" in agriculture enabled by the guano trade was thus "dependent on the expropriated labor of countless debt peons whose mobility was also entwined with new modes of control." Edward D. Melillo, "The First Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Trade, 1840-1930," *American Historical Review* 117(October 2012), 1056-1057.

Within the world system of capital, the robbing of the soil in Europe thus necessitated the importation of guano from Peru, and in the process fed into the robbing of human labor on a truly global scale.<sup>507</sup>

As Clark and Bellamy Foster see it, the original sin underlying this process of “global metabolic rift” is nothing less than the commercialization of agriculture, which amounts to an almost Promethean theft of the Earth's bounty.

Gregory Cushman, who has written probably the definitive work on the Pacific guano economy to date, offers a broadly similar analytical framework. Again using the work of Alfred Crosby as a touchstone, Cushman proposes the concept of “neo-ecological imperialism”, which he distinguishes from Crosby's original model insofar as:

Rather than enabling the conquest of new environments and their settlement by invasive organisms and ethnicities, neo-ecological imperialism primarily focused on the maintenance and improvement of environments already inhabited by European-derived peoples.<sup>508</sup>

Cushman's analysis differs from Clark and Bellamy Foster's in some respects. For him the original sin was committed not on the farms of the Old World, but at Plymouth Rock:

The ecological bounty produced by colonizing lifestyles is bound to be short-lived... Invasive farmers and herders - even hunter gatherers - will eventually use up the abundance they find in newly conquered lands.<sup>509</sup>

But like them, Cushman sees the peculiarly “ecological” impact of imperialism as inhering in the unequal material transfer of nutrients, embodied within commodified guano fertilizer, from periphery to metropolis. And like them, he seeks to connect imperialism with what he sees as unsustainable modes of consumption.

507. *Ibid.*, 316, 330.

508. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, 77.

509. *Ibid.*, 76.

Historians of Japan also make the connection between unsustainability and imperialism. Toshihiro Higuchi proposes “an ecological definition of Japanese colonialism: Japan as an organic empire... [in which] the agricultural core sucked up the organic material while transferring the environmental costs of its production to the colonial frontier.” Higuchi concludes that:

Political conquest and commercial networks in Japan’s frontier, combined with the introduction of technologies, enlarged the geographic circulation of soil nutrients, such that Japan’s core agricultural regions removed ecological bottlenecks to their future development. This solution, however, only postponed the problem through externalization; it was not a sustainable solution.<sup>510</sup>

Similarly, Hiraoka Akitoshi's path-breaking monograph on Japanese exploitation of albatrosses - to which this study is heavily indebted - explains Japan's territorial expansion into the Pacific as driven by a process of resource exhaustion<sup>511</sup> on successive islands. According to Hiraoka’s model, extirpation of birdlife on a given island led to a shift to guano extraction, and depletion of guano deposits in turn led to a search for new islands to exploit.<sup>512</sup> Japanese pursuit of albatrosses thus followed a logical trajectory from lone adventurers in search of feathers, to larger-scale commercial plumage harvesting operations, to domination of whole islands by monopoly capital hitched to the military industrial complex, until eventually the Japanese state began using military force to continue its expansion into the South Seas. For Hiraoka, Japanese activity in the Pacific is a microcosm of the nation's drift toward empire.

510. Higuchi, “Japan as an Organic Empire,” 140, 154.

511. Japanese: *shigen kokatsu* 資源枯渴.

512. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to ‘teikoku’ Nihon*, 265.

All of the above-mentioned accounts are materialist to some degree. Presuming that finite stocks of nutrients exist in the world, they then infer that the capitalist mode of production, with its endless accumulation of wants, is not merely iniquitous but also unsustainable. But sustainability is as difficult to evaluate as resources are to quantify. Agricultural soil, for instance, can alternatively be understood as a naturally endowed substance possessed of finite fertility, or as a cultivated artifact whose productive capacity has been augmented through the transfer of nutrients from elsewhere. Seen in the latter light, the proliferation of commercial fertilizers represents not so much a radical departure as a continuation in a long trajectory of agricultural intensification. Notwithstanding the palpable concern of soil scientists such as von Liebig, evidence as to whether European soil was on the brink of exhaustion by the mid-19th century is mixed at best. Crop yields in Britain, the main guano importing country, “accelerated notably” in the decades leading up to the start of the guano trade.<sup>513</sup> Whether farmers bought guano primarily to replenish their exhausted soil or to augment its nutrient content even further is, at the very least, a moot point.

Rather than try to arrive at an objective assessment of whether the Japanese guano economy was sustainable, this chapter will instead trace the manner in which notions of sustainability were socially, scientifically and politically constructed from the Tokugawa period through to the 1930s. Leaving aside the question of underlying scarcity, it will ask to what degree Japanese colonization of guano islands was driven by the *perception* of scarce resources. Japanese policy makers were certainly exercised by the specter of resource exhaustion, as expressed in a series of ongoing debates in newspapers and agronomic

513. Robert C. Allen, “Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England,” *The Economic History Review* 52, no. 2 (1999), 210.

journals regarding the “fertilizer problem”.<sup>514</sup> But to what degree did the interests of Japanese guano miners and fertilizer manufacturers contribute to shaping these perceptions at the level of national politics?

The chapter will conclude by questioning whether there was anything about Japan’s guano industry, or guano mining more broadly, that inherently constituted a form of imperialism. Extractive industries can develop within both imperial and non-imperial contexts; by the same token, imperial regimes have been known to demonstrate assiduous concern for sustainability when it has suited their interests.<sup>515</sup> So what was it that made the guano trade imperialistic? Was it iniquitous labor practices, credit relationships, and terms of trade - none of which have any particular ecological dimension as such? Or was it simply that the flow of guano from the islands of the Pacific to the fields of farmers disrupted what we now feel should have been conserved as a State of Nature?

### **A Potted History of Japanese Fertiliser, Yayoi-Tokugawa**

Fertilizer usage in the Japanese archipelago predates Japan itself. Archaeological evidence suggests that the first agriculturalists, rotating between fields during the Late Jōmon Period (900-300 B.C.E.), used slash-and-burn techniques, incinerating vegetation into ash so as to accelerate soil nutrient uptake.<sup>516</sup> The paddy-field, introduced from continental Northeast Asia during the Yayoi period (300 B.C.E.-300 C.E.), can usefully be thought of as technology for

514. Japanese: *hiryō mondai*. See Satō Kanji, *Hiryō mondai kenkyū* (Nihon Hyōronsha, 1930)

515. Grove, *Green Imperialism*.

516. Yasushi Kosugi and Yasuhiro Taniguchi, *Daichi to mori no naka de: jōmon jidai no koseitaikei* (Tokyo: Dōseisha, 2009), 108-109.

augmenting the amount of nitrogen nutrients available to rice shoots.<sup>517</sup> The *Seiryōki* (1650), perhaps the earliest agronomic manual published in Japan, advised farmers to apply the following substances to their crops: grasses, leaves, rubbish, sugar cane, sake dregs, rice starch, fishmeal, rotten meat, and compost made from oilseed cake mixed with pigeon excrement.<sup>518</sup> The Japanese archipelago during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) contained some of the most intensively cultivated land on earth, achieved in large part through the labour-intensive application of numerous different kinds of fertilizer biomass. Japanese agriculture up to this point hardly fits any kind of Malthusian model.<sup>519</sup> To the contrary, if anything it adheres loosely to Ester Boserup's theory of economic development, whereby food production keeps step with a growing population by the increased application of labour and technological inputs.<sup>520</sup>

The political economy of Tokugawa fertilizer was played out mostly at the local level.

The vast majority of biomass applied to fields was green manure, sourced not through the market but from the mountainsides that surrounded farming villages.<sup>521</sup> Village councils prescribed detailed rules stipulating when (and by whom) the vegetation of this common

517. Francesca Bray, *The Rice Economies: Technology and Development in Asian Societies* (Univ of California Press, 1994), 10, 13.

518. *Nihon nōsho zenshū dai 10-kan: Seiryōki* (Nōsangyoson Bunka Kyōkai, 1980), 10, 63, 70, 74, 76, 104.

519. It is true that large areas of Japan experienced severe famine during the 1830s Tempō crisis, but it is difficult to attribute this directly to Malthusian pressures: the Japanese population had remained stable during the century leading up to the Tempō crisis. See Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (University of California Press, 2013)

520. Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth; the Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure*.

521. Green manure could be produced by mulching vegetation into compost. Alternatively, many farm households kept livestock as what Pieter de Ganon describes as “chemical factories”, consuming raw inputs of grass and foliage which they processed into manure for use as fertilizer. Pieter de Ganon, “The Animal Economy,” diss., Princeton, April 2011), 70.

land<sup>522</sup> could be gathered. Some villages also organized patrols to guard against infringement.<sup>523</sup> The politics by which fertilizer stocks were procured and preserved were thus intimately woven into the daily lives of Tokugawa farmers. It was not unheard of for the poorer families in the village to dispatch their comely daughters up the mountainside to wangle illicit grass from the youth who was guarding it.<sup>524</sup> “During floods”, complained the author of the *Seiryōki*, “fertilizer is spread equally across all fields, with the result that a lazy farmer receives fertilizer from the fields of his neighbors without needing to do any work himself.”<sup>525</sup>

The Tokugawa period also saw the growth of an increasingly sophisticated market in fertilizers such as night soil, fishmeal, oil-cake and rice bran, mainly bought for application to commercial crops such as tea, mulberry and tobacco. This market at times became subject to regulation by domainal lords seeking to promote sound agricultural policy.<sup>526</sup> The *Seiryōki* was published was based on a series of agricultural texts originally compiled at the request of Matsuura Shūan, a mid-sixteenth century warlord anxious to “promote grain cultivation in

522. Japanese: *iriaichi* 入会地.

523. Conrad Totman, *Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-Industrial Japan* (Ohio University Press, 1998-11-15); Margaret McKean, “Management of Traditional Common Lands (Iriaichi) in Japan,” *Proceedings of the Conference on Common Property Resource Management* (1986). *Iriaichi* governance served two purposes: it prevented the degradation of the mountainside through over-extraction, but also helped to enforce conformity with the social norms of the village, as social ostracism (*mura hachibu*) included the revocation of rights to forage from the village commons (*iriaiken*).

524. Margaret A. McKean, “Management of Traditional Common Lands (Iriaichi) in Japan,” *Proceedings of the Conference on Common Property Resource Management* (21-26 April 1985), 564.

525. *Seiryōki*, 12.

526. Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford University Press, 1998); Luke S. Roberts, *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchant Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th-Century Tosa* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

proportion to the number of people in his realm”.<sup>527</sup> Anne Walthall describes how, in the late eighteenth century, the Shogunate sided with farmers over traders by capping the price of night soil transported from Edo to elsewhere in the Kantō region.<sup>528</sup> Matsumae domain, on the far northern periphery of the Tokugawa polity, was so reliant on the herring fertilizer industry that it did not even bother to cultivate an agricultural economy.<sup>529</sup> By the nineteenth century, wealthy farmers in the Kinki region were known to grow even staple crops such as rice using fishmeal produced in the Ezochi (present-day Hokkaido) and shipped along the Sea of Japan coastline.<sup>530</sup>

For all this, no polity as yet existed in Tokugawa Japan that even comprehended - much less grappled with - the problem of "fertilizer scarcity" on a national level. Partly this was because Tokugawa Japan lacked many of the basic institutions with which the nation state is counted, measured, imagined. But even had the Shogunate possessed the means to develop a national fertilizer policy, Tokugawa agronomists still lacked the intellectual framework to evaluate different types of fertilizer according to a common nutritional standard.

### **A Pedological Paradigm Shift: Tsunetō Noritaka vs the *Rōnō* Agronomists**

The political transformations of the Meiji era (1868-1912) affected Japanese agriculture in numerous ways. Most profoundly, the Meiji land tax reform made agricultural land a salable

527. *Seiryōki*, 14.

528. Anne Walthall, “Sōdai and the Sale of Edo Nightsoil,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 1988)

529. Howell, *Capitalism From Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery*, 32.

530. Nakanishi Satoru, *Umi no fugō no shihonshugi - Kitamaebune to Nihon no sangyōka* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku, 2009)

asset for the first time. The result was a sharp uptick in tenancy during the recession of the 1880s, and a longer term trend toward concentration of land ownership among absentee landlords, increasing tenant indebtedness, and the kind of social strife that generally tends to accompany such arrangements.<sup>531</sup> The commodification of land was also partly responsible for a spurt in land reclamation: by one estimate the amount of farmland under tillage increased by forty-eight per cent over the course of the Meiji period.<sup>532</sup> As much of this new cultivation took place on mountainsides that had previously been set aside as common land, the effect was to deprive many farmers of their usual source of green manure (not to mention fodder, thatch and firewood).

At the same period, however, the volume and variety of commercial fertilizer available to Japanese farmers would increase dramatically. Lower transportation costs meant that vastly larger quantities of fishmeal fertilizer began reaching markets in central Japan, at prices which enabled farmers to use it not just to grow high-value crops such as tea and tobacco but also staples like rice.<sup>533</sup> In 1885 Taki Kumejirō, who would go on to found the Taki Fertilizer Co., began hawking a new kind of phosphate-rich fertilizer to skeptical farmers, one that was manufactured from powdered bonemeal obtained from the slaughterhouses of Kobe.<sup>534</sup> In 1886 Dai Nippon Artificial Fertilizer Company, the nation's first specialist phosphate fertilizer manufacturer, set up business in Tokyo, with financing from the

531. Yoshiaki Nishida and Ann Waswo, *Farmers and Village Life in Japan* (Routledge, 2003).

532. Richard J. Smethurst, *Agricultural Development and Tenancy Disputes in Japan, 1870-1940* (Princeton University Press, 1986), 61.

533. Thomas C Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (Atheneum, 1966), 82.

534. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi* (Tokyo: Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha, 1993), 29.

renowned industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi.<sup>535</sup> From the 1890s Japan would also begin to import fertilizer from abroad, including phosphate rock from the British and German Empires and soybean cake from Qing Manchuria.<sup>536</sup> After the Russo-Japanese War fertilizer application by Japanese farmers began to increase exponentially, as soybean imports rocketed and foreign firms such as Siemens began importing chemical fertilizers that were manufactured using new industrial techniques such as the Caro and Haber-Bosch processes. (See [Figure 4.1](#))

During the Meiji period, the central government also began to pay greater attention to fertilizer. The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce (MAC) was established in 1881, and set out both to acquire the latest Western scientific knowledge and to compile statistics on every aspect of farming, to provide the basis for a national agricultural policy. The ministry's efforts bore fruit in the career of Tsunetō Noritaka. Born in Fukuoka, Tsunetō won a prestigious government scholarship to MAC's newly established Komaba Agricultural School, where he was among the first generation of Japanese to study what might be loosely termed "Western soil science" (as opposed to the extensive body of knowledge produced by indigenous agronomists during the Tokugawa era).<sup>537</sup> At Komaba, foreign experts hired from Germany and Britain instilled von Liebig's principles of organic chemistry, teaching students how to evaluate soil quality according to the concentration of key macro-nutrients. Upon

535. "Jinzō Hiriyōkai no hashira: Nihon Jinzō Hiriyō no hatten" *Hōchi Shimbun*, 20 August 1914. The company was initially named the Tōkyō Artificial Fertilizer Company, but changed its name to Dai Nippon in 1910 after acquiring the Settsu Oil Processing Co. and Ōsaka Sulfuric Co. Takahashi Shū, "Tōkyō Jinzō Hiriyō Kabushiki Gaisha no seikō to kamari seisan," *Shibusawa Kenkyū* 25: 46.

536. Nihon Kasei Hiriyō Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiriyō kōgyō no ayumi* (Tokyo: Nihon Kasei Hiriyō Kyōkai, 1972); Yasutomi Ayumu and Fukao Yōko, *Manshū no seiritsu: shinrin no shōjin to kindai kūkan no keisei* (Nagoya Daigaku, 2009).

537. Thomas C. Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750-1920* (University of California Press, 1988)

graduating in 1882, Tsunetō was seconded to work for the Soils Section of MAC's newly established Geological Survey Institute. For the next twelve years he assisted the founding head of the Soils Section, a foreign expert from Germany called Max Fesca, in the coordination of a laborious twelve-year survey of soil quality throughout Japan.

The results of this survey, published in 1894 as *Nihon Chisan-ron* ("On Soil Productivity in Japan), concluded that Japanese farmland was lacking in phosphate nutrients compared to that of European nations.<sup>538</sup> Tsunetō was instrumental not just in gathering data for the soil survey but in propagating its findings. Dispatched to his native island of Kyūshū to collect samples, he took the opportunity to embark on a lecture tour of village agricultural associations, in which he endeavored to explain to farmers the principles of Liebig's soil chemistry in terms simple enough for them to understand. A typical lecture began as follows:

Today I will not explain my scientific research to you farmers, nor will I talk of difficult matters; but fertilizer consists of three main elements [i.e. nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium]. Unless you practice agriculture with an understanding of these main elements, then no matter what crop you plant, you will not achieve an economically optimum harvest...<sup>539</sup>

The labors of the MAC's Soils Section staff helped to establish von Liebig's paradigm of soil chemistry as best practice within Japanese agriculture, within a comparatively short period of time. This new acceptance often occurred at the expense of indigenous theories espoused by

538. Max Fesca, *Nihon chisan ron* (Tokyo: Nōshōmusho Chisan Chōsasho, 1894); Tsunetō Toshihiko, "Meiji no Pedorojisuto," *Pedorojisuto* 35:1(1991), 68 Lectures by state-sponsored agronomists were a common feature of mid-Meiji rural life. See Ishikawa Daisuke for the activities of Oda Matatarō, a touring agricultural lecturer employed by the Ibaragi prefectural government. Ishikawa Daisuke, "Meiji-ki jinzō hiryō tokuyaku hanbai mo no seiritsu to tenkai: Ibaragi-ken Chiba-ken chiiki no jirei," *Tochi seido shigaku* 173 (October 2001): 37.

539. Tsunetō Noritaka, "Nōji enjutsu hikki" in Kumazawa Kikuo, *Meiji nōsho zenshu: dai 10-kan: dojō hiryō* (Tokyo: Nōsangyoson Bunka Kyōkai, 1984), 355 .

“expert farmers”<sup>540</sup> since the Tokugawa period. For example in the late 1880s Tsunetō, along with his mentor Fesca and Sakō Tsuneaki, the German-trained head of the MAC’s Agricultural Affairs Bureau, fiercely criticized a popular recipe for handmade charcoal fertilizer authored by the agronomist Oiyazu Katsugorō. The attacks drove Oiyazu into seclusion for several years while he attempted to refine his method. But Oiyazu’s attempt to rebuild his credibility in the eyes of farmers would ultimately meet little success.<sup>541</sup>

The paradigm shift had profound implications for the way farmers managed their finances, as the fertilizers espoused by the MAC Soil Section usually had to be purchased. As small cultivators tended to purchase their fertilizer on credit, a poor harvest could result in them being saddled with debts to merchants that they were unable to repay. Farmers’ new-found reliance on credit appalled traditional agronomists like Oiyazu, who chided that “borrowing money to buy commercial fertilizer is like getting addicted to a geisha.”<sup>542</sup> The rapid proliferation of dubious, adulterated or otherwise low-grade products also alarmed the central government, to the extent that in 1899 the Imperial Diet passed the Fertilizer Regulation Law. This law represented an early, limited intervention in the fertilizer industry by the central government: it prohibited the cutting of fertilizers with other substances, and required all manufacturers and retailers of fertilizer to register with district-level fertilizer inspectors.<sup>543</sup>

540. Japanese: *rōnō* 老農.

541. Oiyazu Katsugorō, “Kunshō tsuchi chōwa hiryō seizōhō” in *Ibid.*

542. Katsugorō Oiyazu, *Nibai Shūkaku Tenri Nōhō* (Taiboku Hakushakusho, 1912), 91.

543. Nihon Kasei Hiryō Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryō kōgyō no ayumi*, 31-2; University of Tokyo Economics Library Karinsan sekkai kōgyōkai kankei shiryō collection, *Hiryō torishimari hō kankei* (Shōwa 11-nen) “Hiryō torishimari hō”.

### **Tsunetō Noritaka's search for guano**

Tsunetō took Max Fesca's diagnosis of a nationwide phosphate shortage to heart. In his tract *Phosphate in Enlightened Countries*, published in 1896, he warned of the nation's increasing reliance on imported fertilizer. Furthermore, he deployed statistics collated by the MAC to calculate that Japan was running a yawning nutrient deficit: while the annual harvest withdrew some 16,986,432 *kan*<sup>544</sup> of phosphate from soil each year, only 10,994,416 *kan* worth of phosphate fertilizer was being produced domestically to replenish it. Tsunetō predicted that phosphate gap would eventually come to cripple Japan's agricultural capacity.<sup>545</sup> (See [Figure 4.2](#)) Significantly, at the time Tsunetō conducted his survey only a small amount of fertilizer was being imported into Japan (although the figure was increasing). So Tsunetō could calculate that, even after accounting for the million or so *kan* imported from abroad each year, the nation would still be saddled with a five million *kan* phosphate deficit. Tsunetō would not necessarily have had reason to predict the dramatic increase in fertilizer imports that would occur in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War. (See Figures 4.1 & 4.7)

In 1894, as part of a routine survey, Tsunetō stumbled upon a sizable guano deposit on the southeastern coastline of Kyushu, and from this point began to contemplate the possibility of manufacturing phosphate fertilizer to compensate for Japan's nutrient deficit.<sup>546</sup> In 1897 he represented Japan at the World Geological Congress in St. Petersburg, after which he embarked upon a three-month worldwide fact-finding tour that took in the guano mines of

544. 1 *kan* = approx. 3.75kg.

545. Tsunetō Noritaka, *Rinpi chōsa hōbun dai 1-gō: hinata guni rinkō* (Tokyo: Nōshōmusho Chishitsu Chōsasho, 1896), 7-9.

546. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 1.

Peru and Chile. The following year Tsunetō succeeded Fesca as head of the Soils Section, and began lobbying the government to explore the possibility of exploiting Japan's domestic guano deposits on a commercial scale. His efforts bore fruit in 1901, when MAC appointed him as director of the new Mineral Fertilizer Research Office. But the initial search for guano proved disappointing. After a year of surveys only one deposit, in Ishikawa Prefecture, showed any commercial promise.

Then, the Marcus Island Incident hit the headlines in Japan. (See [Chapter One](#)) The island had been annexed to Japan in 1898, but in the summer of 1902 an armed American guano survey expedition departed Honolulu, in an effort to evict Japanese plumage harvesters from what the expedition's backers claimed was U.S. sovereign territory. The Japanese Foreign Ministry got wind of this plan and quickly despatched a naval frigate to intercept the American ship. While the Japan press waited to hear the outcome of the race to Marcus Island, the news broke that Torishima, another of the outlying Izu Islands, had erupted. The Imperial Navy promptly dispatched another warship, the *Takachiho*, with the primary objective of rescuing any survivors on the island.<sup>547</sup>

At the MFRO, Tsunetō Noritaka managed to arrange for the despatch of a geologist aboard the *Takachiho*, whom he charged with surveying the Izu Islands for guano deposits. The fact that an American guano company believed Marcus Island had commercial potential must have piqued his curiosity, and in a certain sense the timing of Torishima's eruption was fortuitous for him. When the *Takachiho* stopped off at Marcus the MFRO's geologist, a Dr. Yoshida, was able to spend several hours collecting samples of the island's soil. From his

547. Tragically, it turned out that the entire population of the small bird-hunting colony on the island was killed in the eruption. See “Minami Torishima jiken no kaiketsu.”

analysis of the samples Tsunetō deduced that the elevated coral reef which formed the base of Marcus Island had fused with accumulated sand and bird droppings to form a calcified nitrate-heavy guano similar to reserves mined in Puerto Rico.<sup>548</sup> He immediately arranged for a larger sample to be shipped from Marcus. He also began cultivating relationships with the bird hunters who were at that time scouring the North Pacific for plumage, requesting that they collect soil samples from other islands they visited. The MFRO's pedological gaze began to drift offshore.

Though the MFRO was nominally a research institute, Tsunetō clearly saw a role for his organization in the direct operation of guano extraction and marketing. He quickly began arranging to market his “samples” of guano fertilizer through the National Agricultural Association<sup>549</sup> and its network of prefectural member organizations. Within a year over two thousand tons of guano had been excavated from Marcus and shipped to the mainland. But this initial foray into commerce was beset by troubles. Beri-beri broke out among the miners, whose diet consisted almost exclusively of fish and bird meat. The lack of an experienced geologist to direct operations on the ground meant that the quality of the guano mined was highly variable. In the event only a small portion of the phosphate which was shipped to the mainland actually proved salable. The final blow to Tsuneto's operation came when the central government decided to abolish the MFRO completely. The head of the NAA's marketing board complained that the provision of fertilizer to Japan's farmers “had once been regarded as an obligation that ought to be undertaken by the state...but after the government

548. Ōzawa Junji, *Guano hiriyō: Minami Torishima san chōfun rinkō* (Tokyo: Zenkoku Hiriyō Toritsugisho Kabushiki Gaisha, 1904), 3-4.

549. Japanese: Zenkoku Nōjikai. This organization had been established in 1895 to coordinate the activities of prefectural-level agricultural associations. It was the predecessor to the Imperial Agricultural Association (Teikoku Nōkai), which would be formed in 1910.

abolished its research institution, it ceased to pay particular attention to the guano fertilizer on offshore islands.<sup>550</sup>

For Tsunetō, the elimination of the organization he had fought to create personally came as a crushing blow. Years later, he would not bother to disguise his sense of betrayal at what he viewed as the government's negligence:

At this point, when we were making an important discovery toward phosphatic production in our southern possessions, the government may be said to have made an irretrievable mistake in doing away with the Research Office. The cold attitude of indifference shown by the government towards this development of national resources is astonishing.<sup>551</sup>

Soon after the MFRO was abolished, Tsunetō decided to quit government service. In 1904 he published *On Japanese Soil*, which introduced the principles of pedology to a non-specialist audience and largely restated Fesca's argument that Japanese farmland suffered from a phosphate nutrient deficit.<sup>552</sup> He also decided to continue his pursuit of guano phosphate in the private sector, and spent the next several years traveling extensively throughout Okinawa and Taiwan in search for potential deposits - including a 1908 survey of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.<sup>553</sup>

Tsunetō was not the only Japanese guano speculator roaming the West Pacific during this period. Mizutani Shinroku, Marcus Island's leaseholder at the time of the 1902 incident, formally applied to the Tokyo government for permission to mine the island in February of

550. *Ibid.*, 6.

551. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 3-4.

552. Tsunetō Noritaka, *Nihon dojō ron* (Tokyo: Seibidō, 1904)

553. Tsunetō Noritaka, *Minami Nihon no fugen* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1910)

the following year.<sup>554</sup> Even though the contract with the NAA was not renewed, and Mizutani soon moved on to scour other South Sea islands, an organization called the Minami Torishima Joint Stock Company continued to mine the island, producing modest amounts of phosphate into the interwar period.<sup>555</sup> (See [Figure 4.3](#)) In 1907 an adventurer by the name of Nishizawa Yoshiji landed on Pratas Island, south of Japanese-occupied Taiwan, and began organizing a mining crew there. Two years later, news of his scheme hit the headlines in China, sparking threats of a boycott of Japanese goods. The Japanese consul in Guangzhou eventually agreed to recognize Pratas as Chinese sovereign territory, but only after securing for Nishizawa an indemnity of 130,000 silver dollars.<sup>556</sup>

During this same period, the attention of speculators began to focus on Rasa Island. The first record of a Japanese subject making footfall in Rasa dates to 1893, when a naval frigate made a cursory survey of the island.<sup>557</sup> In June 1900 one Nakamura Jūzō (who hailed from the northern prefecture of Niigata) petitioned the Interior Ministry to incorporate Rasa within Okinawa Prefecture. In his application, Nakamura directly cited the precedent of Marcus's annexation two years previously, and stated his intent to develop it a fishery station.<sup>558</sup> But he appears never to have carried through on his promise. In 1906, several different entrepreneurs active in the West Pacific began competing to establish a phosphate mine on Rasa. That year Tamaoki Han'emon, who had established Torishima's albatross culling settlement (See [Chapter One](#)), secured a free fifteen-year lease to the island from the Governor of Okinawa. But Tamaoki's rival, Mizutani Shinroku, also submitted a lease

554. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 10.

555. Aso Yawata, *Rinkō* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1940), 72-74.

556. Bill Hayton, "The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia," (2014), 51.

557. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 17.

558. NAJ Kōbun ruijū dai 24-hen kan-3

application at the same time, and the competing claims quickly embroiled local politicians and triggered law suits.<sup>559</sup>

### **The Rasa Island Phosphate Company**

It was via Mizutani that Tsunetō Noritaka first became involved in the contest for Rasa, when the bird hunter sent him a soil sample collected on the island.<sup>560</sup> Tsunetō's chemical analysis determined that the sample was so promising that, before even visiting Rasa himself, he set about establishing a consortium to purchase the lease. Perhaps Tsunetō's stature as an eminent pedologist and former government official lent him the gravitas to assuage competing interests, or perhaps it was simply his status as an outsider to the competitive world of offshore bird hunting that allowed him to transcend the rivalry between Tamaoki and Mizutani. Rumors also abounded of Tsunetō distributing generous cash payments in order to buy off his competitors.<sup>561</sup>

Years later, Tsunetō would claim that he organized his initial Rasa consortium out of patriotic concern:

A foreign firm in Yokohama had acquired knowledge of the presence of phosphate on Rasa Island, and planned to exploit the island under a certain London syndicate. If this enterprise were to be left in the hands of a foreign interest, our independence in the matter of food production would have been at stake. Realizing that it was above all things most important to preserve the right to exploit it in our own hands, I formed a body of reliable persons at this critical moment; and, in the early spring of 1911, secured and put into the hands of this new body all the interests of those who were connected with the island. Thus, in Feb-

559. *Ibid.*, 19-20.

560. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 5.

561. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 19-20.

ruary 1911, the Rasa Phosphate Mine Company...was organized, and I was elected as its president.<sup>562</sup>

It is certainly plausible that foreign parties may have been interested in exploiting Rasa, for the 1900s saw the beginnings of large-scale phosphate production in the Western Pacific. To Japanese audiences, the 1902 Marcus Island Incident provided the most dramatic illustration of foreign interest in Pacific guano, but other ventures were also beginning to flourish. In 1899 a British company had begun mining on Christmas Island, then administered under the Straits Settlements colony, and had begun exporting to Japan in 1901.<sup>563</sup> And in 1909 the Deutsche Sudseeposphat A.G. began mining the island of Angaur in German Micronesia.<sup>564</sup> But even if a foreign plot to exploit Rasa had been afoot, it bears stating that Tsunetō had long ago left government service by this point, and his consortium clearly hoped to turn a profit from Rasa's guano. In this sense he was acting out of commercial as well as patriotic motives.

The mining operation on Rasa got off to a rocky start, however. Shortly after the first laborers arrived the island was hit by a storm which destroyed their accommodation and wrecked the desalinization plant, their only source of drinking water. The men nearly died of thirst while waiting for the next boat to arrive, and then promptly demanded to return to mainland Japan. Even after mining operations got under way, sales were initially slow, as

562. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 6.

563. John Graham Hunt, *Suffering Through Strength: The Men Who Made Christmas Island* (J. Hunt, 2011); Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryo kōgyō no ayumi*, 32.

564. Mark R. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992)

fertilizer manufacturers were reluctant to believe that the quality of Rasa's phosphate could equal that of foreign imports.<sup>565</sup>

Tsunetō's company was saved, in more than one way, by the outbreak of World War I. In 1913, he had unsuccessfully petitioned the Communications Ministry to install a wireless radio station on the island, so as to obtain more accurate updates on weather conditions. The urgency of this was highlighted in June 1914, when one of the company's ships was wrecked in a storm off the coast of Okinawa, with all hands lost. Two months later Japan declared war on Germany, and began naval operations to seize German colonies in East Asia. Tsunetō repeated his request for a wireless on Rasa, emphasizing:

the strategical importance of such a means of communication... During the Russo-Japanese War, Miyako-jima, one of the Liu Kiu Islands, had no telegraphic communication connecting with Japan proper, and it happened that enemy warships passed through the island channel without their presence being known to our fleet.<sup>566</sup>

Crucially, in his renewed application Tsunetō also managed to convince the Navy to lobby on his behalf, and in December 1914 the Communications Ministry finally assented to open a wireless office on Rasa. In this way, Tsunetō successfully argued that the interests of his young company coincided with the national interest.

The Rasa Co. also sought to take advantage of the windfall from Japanese military gains in Germany's East Asian Empire. When the Japanese Navy occupied the island of Angaur in German Micronesia, Tsunetō submitted an application to operate the mine on its

565. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 14-15.

566. *Ibid.*, 26.

behalf.<sup>567</sup> The bid was unsuccessful, however; instead the license to mine Angaur phosphate was granted to Nishizawa Yoshiji, the same man who had inflamed Chinese public opinion by staking a claim for Pratas Island in the South China Sea. Nishizawa operated the Angaur concession for over a year before the Navy revoked his license, worried that rumors of Nishizawa's maltreatment of indigenous workers would undermine Japan's claim to be liberating Micronesians from German oppression. (Nishizawa had apparently been physically abusing his workers, and paying them with currency he printed himself.) The Navy eventually consigned operation of the Angaur mine to the South Pacific Mandate government.<sup>568</sup>

Beyond providing opportunities for military collaboration, World War I also imparted a significant fillip to Japan's nascent phosphate fertilizer industry. The war resulted in a worldwide shipping shortage that curtailed imports and sent prices spiraling.<sup>569</sup> The sudden drop off in foreign competition represented an opportunity for domestic manufacturers: existing Japanese firms such as Dai Nippon and Taki Fertilizer began ramping up their capacity, and newer manufacturers such as Sumitomo also entered the market.<sup>570</sup> Market conditions were buoyant enough for Tsunetō to expand his company's operations on Rasa throughout the war years, until by 1918 there were more than 2,000 workers on the island mining over 160,000 tons of phosphate per year.<sup>571</sup> ([See Figure 4.4](#))

Aside from the potential profits, World War I seemed to be an opportunity to realize a vision long-cherished by Tsunetō. “Phosphate self-sufficiency a possibility: imports can be

567. JAN kōbun zassan Taishō 5-nen dai 24-hen dai-35-kan: “Rasa-tō Rinkō Kabushiki Gaisha shachō Tsunetō Noritaka kaishin Nanyō Angauru-jima jigyō keiei kyōka seigan no ken”

568. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945.*, 67.

569. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 37-38.

570. Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryo kōgyō no ayumi*, 42-43.

571. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 37.

easily replaced!” declared the *Jiji Shimpō* in 1915, estimating that Japan had the potential to quadruple the area currently under excavation if only the state and private sector would commit to more research. Tsunetō was likely a key source for the article: it mentioned the Rasa mine specifically and provided statistics showing that 83% of Japan's potential additional capacity lay offshore, in either Okinawa or the Izu Islands.<sup>572</sup>

Spurred on by this prospect, the Rasa Co. began searching for new sources of guano, if necessary by further expanding the definition of “offshore Japan”. In 1918 it despatched a survey expedition to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, attempting to stake out a claim to yet more uninhabited guano islands. In this respect the company can be said to have embarked on a specifically colonialist (although not necessarily imperialist) project to claim and develop new sovereign territory for the Japanese nation state. As a result of this survey, the company identified eleven new islands as having particularly promising phosphate reserves and named them the New Southern Islands (Shin Nan Guntō). The company then notified the Naval Ministry, Colonial Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of its discovery, and petitioned for the islands to be recognized as Japanese sovereign territory. The government however, mindful of the diplomatic ramifications of such a move, advised the company to first establish a concrete presence on the islands. So in 1921 the Rasa Co. established a token mining operation on an island it called Nagashima, so as to demonstrate continuous occupation of the territory.<sup>573</sup> (See [Figure 4.5](#)) The mine ran for eight years before eventually closing, and it was only in 1939 that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs finally issued a statement that the New Southern Islands were to be incorporated within the Government

572. “Rinkō jikyū kanōsei” *Jiji Shimpō*, 4 September 1915.

573. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 45-49.

General of Taiwan. Whatever value this sovereignty claim amounted to, however, would be negated by the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty, in which Japan renounced sovereignty over Taiwan as a whole.

### **The Political Economy of a Phosphate Glut**

The return of peacetime economic conditions forced Japanese fertilizer manufacturers to sharply reassess their business strategies. During the war they had expanded rapidly, insulated from foreign competition and even managing to export to East Asia and Australia. But the postwar recession, brought about an abrupt realization that the industry as a whole was now characterized by chronic overproduction. By 1921, Japan's fourteen phosphate manufacturers between them had an annual capacity of thirty-two million tons, double the amount purchased yearly by Japanese farmers.<sup>574</sup> (See [Figure 4.6](#) for an approximation of the main companies' market share) The crunch was especially severe for the Rasa Co., which was primarily a producer of raw phosphate, not yet processed into fertilizer, and now found their product competing with rock sourced from as far afield as as Egypt and Florida.<sup>575</sup> (See [Figure 4.7](#))

The company took a number of measures to reposition itself in this new, more straightened business environment. Firstly, it moved to vertically integrate its supply chain. In 1919 it purchased a bleach manufacturing company in Osaka and converted it into a fertilizer factory, so that it was no longer merely a supplier of raw phosphate to fertilizer manufactur-

574. Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyokai, *Rinsan hiryo kogyo no ayumi*, 49.

575. "Rinkoseki no jukyū akka," *Keizai zasshi Daiyamondo*, 1 March 1927: 19.

ers but a producer of its own branded fertilizer.<sup>576</sup> Like other fertilizer manufacturers, it also sought to build a network of franchised retailers that would market its product directly to farmers.<sup>577</sup> An advertising poster from the interwar period, most likely designed for display in a village level retailer, portrayed Rasa Island as a tropical paradise teeming with seabirds.

(See [Figure 4.8](#))

As well as competing more aggressively with each other for farmers' loyalties, Japan's phosphate fertilizer manufacturers also began exploring strategies for collusion so as to "stabilize" (which in practice meant to sustain) phosphate prices.<sup>578</sup> In 1921 Tsunetō's successor as Rasa Co. director gave a closed address to the Fertilizer Association<sup>579</sup>, in which he lamented that companies were now "competing like wild dogs over a single scrap of meat," and suggested that the major domestic manufacturers form a cartel to limit production, monopolize distribution routes, and shut out foreign competition. "We captains of industry," he urged "must awaken the patriotism of the average citizens" in order to support "national production in the global economic war".<sup>580</sup>

Michael Barnhart has shown how Japanese military strategists came to view autarky as a geopolitical imperative during the interwar period. The pre-eminent reason for Germany's defeat during World War I, they deduced, was its vulnerability to naval blockade,

576. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha 50 Shūnen kinenshi Henshū Iinkai, *Rasa Kōgyō 50-nen no ayumi* (Tokyo: Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha, 1962), 7.

577. Ishikawa Daisuke, "Meiji-ki jinzō hiryō tokuyaku hanbai mo no seiritsu to tenkai: Ibaragi-ken Chiba-ken chiiki no jirei." For a discussion of phosphate fertilizer manufacturers' mixed success in monopolizing distribution routes, see Satō Kanji, *Hiryō mondai kenkyū*, 162-163.

578. "Karinsan gaisha gōdō keikaku," *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 11 March 1929: 38-39.

579. Japanese: Hiryō Rengōkai

580. Ono Yoshio, *Jinpi Kyōdō Hanro Setsuritsu No Hitsuyō Oyobi Riyū* (Tokyo: Ono Yoshio, 1921)

which had ended up fatally compromising its military capability. Success in total war required total economic self-sufficiency. The irony of such reasoning was that Japanese leaders, pursuing the goal of self-sufficiency, ended up steering their country toward fighting and losing just such a war.<sup>581</sup> Japanese fertilizer manufacturers had their own incentive to promote autarky. It formed a convenient pretext for “reforming”<sup>582</sup> the industry through the operation of a cartel that would impose limits on production, lobby to exclude foreign competition, and provide export subsidies so that manufacturers might “sally forth united into the battle for international markets.”<sup>583</sup>

Promotional literature put out by the Rasa Co. during this period thus stressed the strategic significance of fertilizer production. A corporate pamphlet, written by Tsunetō himself, featured the following preamble:

An ample production of food within a country's borders is the most essential factor in the real independence of a nation. Viewed in this light, Japan is in a precarious situation. Our arable area is very limited, with little or no hope for further extension of cultivated land. This limited area has been under intensive cultivation for many generations, and its recent yearly yields have been hardly sufficient to provide for the whole nation. On the other hand, population keeps on increasing at a rate far surpassing the increase in food production. Under this strained condition, the only alternative is either to increase production by a more improved cultivation or leave the pride of national aspiration at the mercy of other countries.<sup>584</sup>

581. Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941 (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)* (Cornell University Press, 2001)

582. Japanese: *kaizen* 改善.

583. Yoshio, *Jinpi Kyōdō Hanro Setsuritsu No Hitsuyō Oyobi Riyū*; “Rinpi jokyū to shikyō - joykū kankei kaizen saru,” *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 21 April 1929: 17.

584. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, preface. Tsunetō went on to remind readers that “Until comparatively recent years, all the supply of rock phosphate has been obtained exclusively through importation. This was a great disadvantage to our agricultural world and at the same time a source of great uneasiness to the nation, for should importation be cut off by some other reason or another, our national food production would be greatly

Tsunetō's previous warnings of a national phosphate deficit, a refrain of his since the 1890s, were now refashioned into a specifically geopolitical argument, tapping into post-World War I anxieties about blockade warfare in order to make the case for economic protectionism.

The effort to set limits on production was only partially successful at first. Members of the Fertilizer Association periodically agreed to all shutter their factories for month-long periods, or sometimes to adhere to absolute production quotas. But they did not always keep their promises. *The Diamond*, a business periodical that devoted extensive coverage to the fertilizer industry, singled out Sumitomo and Taki as particularly prone to backsliding on their commitments - but also noted that these companies, with their lower production costs, deeper capital reserves and broader distribution networks, were better positioned to risk a return to perfect market competition. Sumitomo, as a general trading company, was able to enjoy lower production costs due to its access to cheap sources of imported raw phosphate. In this sense the rifts in the Fertilizer Association reflected a fundamental division in Japan's phosphate fertilizer industry, between those companies who sourced their phosphate domestically (including from newly claimed islands such as Rasa) and those who imported it from abroad. In the Kantō region surrounding Tokyo the former tended to dominate, and there the cartel's production limits held strong; in the Kansai region, where Sumitomo and Taki's manufacturing facilities were based, they tended to weaken more quickly.<sup>585</sup>

curtailed. During the Russo-Japanese War we tasted such a bitter experience. The same thing was likewise the case during the European War."

585. "Karinsan hiryō fusei to kakusha no taiōsaku," *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 21 November 1926: 15; "Karinsan sagyō zenkyū to sono zento," *Daiyamondo*, 1 January 1927: 27; "Hiryō sōba to zaika," *Daiyamondo*, 11 February 1926: 16; "Rinkōseki no jukyū akka," *Daiyamondo*, 1 March 1927: 19; "Rinpi no jukyū to shikyō," 11 August 1927: 18.

Over time, the cartel's sway over the industry grew somewhat stronger - but never all-powerful. In 1925 it was formalized into a legally recognized new institution, the Phosphate Fertilizer Industrial Association (Rinsan Hiriyō Kōgyō Kumiai).<sup>586</sup> By that same year, reported *The Diamond*, the association's attempt to set up monopolize distribution routes through a “system of cooperative retail” (*kyōdō hanbai sei*) had achieved “ninety per cent success”.<sup>587</sup> By the following year even the recalcitrant Sumitomo and Taki had been successfully corralled into a new organization, the Superphosphate League (Karinsan Renmeikai) which was empowered to set prices and production quotas across the whole industry. But the Superphosphate League’s remit did not extend to the emerging new sector of compound fertilizers, which combined phosphatic, potassic and nitrogenous fertilizers into a single substance for ease of application.<sup>588</sup> As compound fertilizers began to claim an ever larger share of the total fertilizer market from the mid-1920s (see [Figure 4.1](#)), the cartel’s ability to prop up prices began to wane once again.<sup>589</sup>

Partly as a result of the cartel’s continuing ineffectiveness, the Rasa Co.'s fortunes continued to wane throughout the 1920s. Not only did the price of phosphate remain stagnant, the company struggled under the burden of corporate debt accrued from its aggressive expansion during the previous decade. Perhaps ironically, given Tsunetō’s frequent insistence on the importance of an autonomous national fertilizer industry, the bulk of this debt was owed to foreign financiers.<sup>590</sup> The company continued to reduce the scale of its operations on Rasa, so that by 1927, the Rasa Island mine, was producing less than a

586. Nihon Kasei Hiriyō Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiriyō kōgyō no ayumi*, 52.

587. “Rinpi no junan jidai,” *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 1 October 1929: 32.

588. “Hiryō-kai no shin genshō,” *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 11 November 1928: 16-17.

589. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 53.

590. “Rasa-tō Rinkō no kinkyō,” *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 11 July 1927: 46-47.

quarter the output of its peak in 1918. In 1928 the company underwent comprehensive debt restructuring, and shifted the focus of its business from mining raw phosphate to manufacturing branded fertilizer using phosphate purchased from the South Sea Mandate government's mine on Angaur.<sup>591</sup> All of the Rasa Co.'s mining facilities were mothballed, both on Rasa Island itself and on Nagashima in the New Southern Islands. The Rasa Co.'s business report for May 1928 struck an unmistakably elegiac note:

After endeavoring to develop this uninhabited island for a full seventeen years and seven months, ever since the time when the company was a limited partnership, to have it now revert to its uninhabited former state is truly regrettable.<sup>592</sup>

*The Diamond* explained that the Rasa mining facility had been shuttered because phosphate reserves on the island had been exhausted.<sup>593</sup> But this was not the case. Just two years previously, the *Chūgai Shōgyō Shimpō* had reported that new deposits had been discovered on Rasa.<sup>594</sup> The company's own business report explained that the mine's closure was necessitated by the industry-wide recession (itself a response to Japan's stagnant agricultural economy in the late 1920s), and by the proliferation of cheaper imported phosphate. It nevertheless looked "forward to a time when the state of the industry makes it financially feasible to begin work there once again."<sup>595</sup> In other words, the decision to close the mine was based not on an assessment that phosphate deposits were exhausted, but simply that remaining reserves were not worth mining at the prevailing market price. Indeed in 1933 the

591. "Rasa-tō Rinkō Kaisha," *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 1 May 1929: 83.

592. Rasajima Rinkō Kabushiki Gaisha, *Dai 30-ki jigyō hōkoku*, 15 May 1928, 5.

593. "Rasa-tō Rinkō Kaisha," *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 1 May 1929: 83.

594. *Chūgai Shōgyō Shimpō*, 5th May 1926: "I wo tsuyō suru ni taru Rasa-tō no rinkōseki"

595. Rasa-tō Rinkō Kabushiki Gaisha, *Dai 30-ki jigyō hōkoku*, 15 May 1928, 5.

company would resume mining on the island, and would continue to do so until nearly the end of the Pacific War.<sup>596</sup> (See Figure 4.7)

The concept of national fertilizer scarcity had originally been propagated by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in the mid-Meiji period, as a metric by which to both evaluate and promote agricultural development. In the interwar era, private-sector fertilizer manufacturers appropriated this discourse, giving it a military strategic gloss as a means to lobby for protectionist industrial policy that would remedy what was in fact, from their perspective, an over-abundance of phosphate. Finally, farmers themselves also embraced the discourse of resource scarcity when they lobbied the Japanese state to intervene in the fertilizer industry, sometimes in order to rein in what they perceived to be the oligopolistic power of the manufacturers. The first instance of this came in 1924, when a Diet member representing Ibaraki called for the government to establish a state-owned factory to process raw Angaur phosphate into fertilizer for the nation's farmers.<sup>597</sup> The suggestion was rejected, but during the 1920s rural agricultural cooperatives began negotiating discounted bulk purchases from manufacturers, and also to lobby for increased government regulation of fertilizer prices.<sup>598</sup> Farmers and their representatives also protested against domestic manufacturers' attempts to restrict fertilizer imports, understandably suspicious that this would result

596. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 70.

597. Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryo kōgyō no ayumi*, 51. The representative in question, Saitō Tōshirō, had previously served in various positions in fertilizer retail and manufacturing, including as chief executive of the Ōsaka Guano Co and as founder of the Osaka Sulphuric Co.

598. University of Tokyo Economics Library Karinsan sekkai kōgyōkai kankei shiryō collection, *Hiryo torishimari hō kankei* (Shōwa 11-nen), “Hiryo torishimari hōki kaisei jō kōryo subeki jikō”

in higher prices for end-users.<sup>599</sup> They scored a crucial victory in securing the revision of the Fertilizer Regulation Law to empower central government regulation of retailers (something that had previously been left up to local officials) and, more importantly, enabling the government to set prices and production quotas for certain types of fertilizer.<sup>600</sup>

In other words, even when the interests of farmers and fertilizer producers directly clashed, both sides deployed the discourse of national fertilizer scarcity in order to cast their self-interest in terms of the public good. In 1931, one journalist attempted to persuade skeptical international opinion that Kwantung Army's invasion of Northeast China was justifiable because of the region's importance to Japanese food security:

Japan's main concern... was over the food supplies of Manchuria. The soya bean, Manchuria's main product, is used by Japanese farmers as fertilizer for their rice fields. If this supply is shut off... Japan will be economically at the mercy of both Russia and China and will be doomed to take a back seat... The American people must realize that Manchuria is absolutely necessary to us, if we are to survive as a nation.<sup>601</sup>

This new consensus, that the nation's nutrient supply - the so-called "fertilizer problem"<sup>602</sup> - constituted a legitimate object of state intervention, was manifested in a range of policy initiatives over the course of the 1930s. In that decade the government disbursed some four million yen in subsidies to agricultural cooperatives for the purposes of purchasing

599. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

600. "Hiryō kanri an to Nihon Chisso Hiryō," *Keizai zasshi daiyamondo*, 11 October 1917, 40-42; "Hiryō kanri an ni tsuite," *Daiyamondo*, 1 February 1929: 13. The revised law technically only applied to fertilizers containing nitrogen. But as this included the new range of compound fertilizers that had begun to proliferate from the latter half of the 1920s, it indirectly effected phosphate fertilizers as well.

601. Guy V. Miller, "Manchuria's Food is Japan's Life Line; Nipponese Writer Points to Population" *Pittsburgh Press*, 12 February 1938, 3.

602. Satō Kanji, *Hiryō mondai kenkyū*.

fertilizer.<sup>603</sup> On the supply side, the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce in 1936 managed, through a rare feat of collaboration, to push the Important Fertilizer Industry Regulation Law through the Imperial Diet.<sup>604</sup> The new legislation aimed at eliminating speculative trading by retailers and “unnecessary competition” among manufacturers, by bringing the entire industry under state supervision. Imports and exports would be restricted “where necessary for the public interest”. To mollify farmers, prices would be set by the Ministry of Agriculture. The role played by agricultural cooperatives in fertilizer distribution also increased dramatically: in 1932 coops managed nineteen per cent of national fertilizer sales; by 1937 this had increased to thirty-nine per cent.<sup>605</sup> In this way, maintaining the fertility of the Japanese archipelago became a matter of national government policy, just as Tsunetō Noritaka had hoped it would.

### ***Tabula Rasa: The Impossibility of a Birds-Eye View of History***

Kumazawa Kikuo, an eminent historian of Japan’s fertilizer industry and the closest Tsunetō Noritaka has to a biographer, credits the man as a foresighted patriot, who both in his pioneering pedological research and his development of Rasa Island “made a truly valuable contribution to securing phosphate fertilizer resources for our nation.”<sup>606</sup> This assessment of

603. Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryo kōgyō no ayumi*, 57.

604. The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce had been partitioned in 1925, a reflection of the increasingly diverging interests of Japan’s agrarian and non-agrarian economic sectors. See Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy: 1925-1975* (Stanford University Press, 1982)

605. Kerry Smith, *A Time of Crisis: Japan, the Great Depression, and Rural Revitalization (Harvard East Asian Monographs)* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 275-276. See also Teruoka Shūzō, *Nihon nōgyō shi: shihonshugi no tenkai to nōgyō mondai* (Tokyo: Yūhaikaku, 1981), 176-177.

606. Kumazawa Kikuo, “Tsunetō Noritaka to Nihon no rinsan shigen,” 62.

Tsunetō's legacy is perfectly valid in its own terms; but they are terms that Tsunetō himself did more than any single person to propagate. If the purpose of the Rasa Company was to augment the phosphate content of Japanese soil, then it achieved a great deal. But it is equally true that as an investment proposition the Rasa Co. was less successful. By the time of the 1927 financial crisis, the Rasa Co. had accumulated some twelve million yen in corporate debt (compared to its market valuation of ¥7.5 million), the servicing of which pushed the company permanently into the red the following year. The company was forced to undergo substantial financial restructuring before returning to profitability into the 1930s.<sup>607</sup>

Moreover, the national fertilizer policy that Tsunetō helped to craft did not in the final instance have much success in reducing Japan's reliance on imported raw phosphate. On the contrary, phosphate imports to Japan continued to increase right up until 1940. (See [Figure 4.7](#)) During World War II, the Ministry of Agriculture successfully lobbied for prioritized shipping of raw phosphate from Rasa, Angaur, and newer additions to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere such as Jiangsu in China and Laokay in French Indonesia. As part of the same effort toward state-directed rationalization, the Rasa Co. was reorganized under the Precious Metals Mining Planning Law to form the East Asian Mining Co, and charged with administering phosphate mines in newly seized territory.<sup>608</sup> But the volume of raw phosphate that reached mainland Japan in this way was only ever a fraction of the amount previously imported from Egypt and the U.S., and dwindled further as shipping shortages worsened in

607. "Rasa-to Rinkō no kinkyō," *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo*, 11 July 1927: 46-47.

608. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 113-5, 123.

the latter phase of the war.<sup>609</sup> In the final instance, the dream of Japanese nutrient autarky proved to be a mirage.

For Hiraoka Akitoshi, conversely, Rasa Island serves as an example of Japan's expansion into the South Pacific, a trajectory in which over-exploitation led to resource exhaustion, which led to a search for yet more resources, ending eventually in imperial aggression. Though he draws the opposite conclusion, Hiraoka's argument parallels Kumazawa's in its stark materialism, with resource extraction leading not to nation building but imperialism. It is certainly true that South Seas entrepreneurs cultivated relationships with the Japanese military that deepened over time. During the invasion of German Micronesia, Mizutani Shinroku served as a guide aboard a battleship.<sup>610</sup> And many other natives of the Izu and Bonin Islands emigrated to the South Pacific Mandate, never to return.<sup>611</sup> Yet the relationship between the fertilizer industry, offshore guano extraction, and Japanese imperialism is more nuanced. Complicity in Japan's Southern Advance does not prove causal significance. The Japanese military's decision to invade Micronesia during World War I was motivated primarily by strategic goals: the desire to expel the German fleet from East Asia, and to secure the harbor at Truk for construction of a naval base.<sup>612</sup> It was not until the inter-war period that strategic thinking within the Japanese military took on an explicitly economic

609. Bruce F Johnston, *Japanese Food Management in World War II* (Stanford University Press, 1953), 108-109.

610. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 246-247.

611. According to an official history of the Izu Islands, in 1945 many of these islanders "chose to commit suicide in the face of the enemy's advance, in much the same way as the Okinawan Lily Brigades." Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 1073-1074.

612. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, 38, 44, 231.

dimension, and even then there is little evidence that the phosphate industry (let alone the plumage industry) exercised direct influence on military decision-making.<sup>613</sup>

Neither is it the case that the interests of the phosphate fertilizer industry were completely aligned in the face of Japanese imperial expansion. In one sense, the Micronesian phosphate island of Angaur represented a windfall for the Japanese nation as a whole, as the Japanese Navy was able to seize the German capital that had been invested in the mine, along with its established networks of labor recruitment. But the mine's raw phosphate production also competed with pre-existing enterprises like the one on Rasa Island, even to the point of driving them out of business at times. After 1922 the Angaur mine was operated by the South Pacific Mandate government, which prioritized the health of its own balance sheet over the wellbeing of the nation's fertilizer manufacturers. Angaur phosphate therefore sold to the highest bidder: when the Japanese Phosphate Fertilizer Association attempted to purchase Angaur's raw phosphate output, it found itself competing with general trading companies like Mitsui Bussan and Suzuki Shōten.<sup>614</sup>

Finally, to what extent can life on Rasa Island itself be seen as shaped by processes of ecological imperialism? One of the key inferences of the ecological imperialism paradigm is that the exploitation of the natural world goes hand in hand with the exploitation of human beings - either as laborers subjected to appalling working conditions or as indigenes whose resources were wrongfully appropriated. Hiraoka, by charting a process that begins with the slaughter of albatrosses and ends with the invasion of the Marshall Islands and the subjugation of its population to imperial rule, draws an implicit connection between the human and

613. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941* (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs).

614. Nihon Kasei Hiryo Kyōkai, *Rinsan hiryo kōgyō no ayumi*, 47, 51.

non-human victims of Japanese expansion into the Pacific. “Colonized regions and peoples,” writes Cushman, “bore the brunt of the environmental degradation and human suffering generated by neo-ecological imperialism.”<sup>615</sup> Significantly, he declines to differentiate between imperialism and colonialism at the very moment in which he elides human and environmental impact. Yet the distinction is a useful one: imperialism can be understood as discriminatory regimes of rule over people, whereas colonialism can be understood as techniques of claiming and settling territory. Given this, how useful is the concept of imperialism - ecological, neo-ecological or otherwise - for describing the experience of those - human or non-human - who actually lived on Rasa?

The human perspective on Rasa Island is recoverable, to a limited extent, through the Rasa Co.'s published material and through the recollections of those who worked on the island. The company took pains to advertise the amenities available to workers on the island, which included a vegetable garden and fishery so as to provide a varied diet and eliminate beri-beri, a resident doctor who provided vaccinations against typhoid, and a mutual relief society to which it contributed one half of total funds. As the only supplier of goods on the island, it also committed to provide daily necessities at cost price. Pay was competitive: a 1920 recruitment notice in the *Okinawa Asahi Shimbun* promised a monthly wage of between thirty and eighty yen, plus board and lodging, at a time when Japanese blue-collar household income averaged ninety-three yen.<sup>616</sup> (The average Okinawan wage would have been much lower than this.) The company advertised that “the thirteen hundred Okinawan workers on

615. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, 78.

616. *Okinawa Asahi Shimbun*, 6 May 1920, 1: “Rasa-tō yuki rōdōsha boshū”; Naikaku Tōkei Kyoku, *Kakei chōsa hōkoku*: “20-2-a Jitsu shūnyū kaikyū betsu ichi-setai atari toshi heikin ikkagetsu aida no shūnyū to shishutsu (rōdō setai)”

Rasa Island between them send remittances of over thirty thousand yen each month back to their home villages.” The few scattered surviving accounts by workers from Rasa also attest that they were able to save large amounts of money during their time on the island.<sup>617</sup>

But life on the island was a far cry from paradise. In addition to long hours of grueling work in the tropical heat, laborers were subjected to a distinctly Taylorian brand of corporate paternalism: in the interests of increasing productivity, workmen's "supplies of intoxicants" were rationed.<sup>618</sup> Nor was there much else in the way of diversion. “With no entertainment of any kind, there was nothing to spend money on, ” recalled one worker. “All we could do was save it.”<sup>619</sup> (To minimize labor unrest, however the company devised a policy of employing women as well as men on the island, and even encouraged workers to bring their children with them to the island.)<sup>620</sup> Laborers signed on for two-year contracts at the mine, and although they were not indentured, walking off the job was not so easy in practice. Rasa was a full day's sail from the Okinawa main island and transport links, always intermittent, became even more so after 1922, when budget cutbacks caused the company to suspend its mail service to the island.<sup>621</sup> When eruptions of worker discontent occurred, they had to be mediated with the Rasa Co. directly in all but the most extreme cases, for the only agent of the state present on the island was a single police constable.<sup>622</sup> In August 1914 a

617. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 202-204. Hiraoka notes, however, that in a bitter twist the value of many workers' savings would later be obliterated by wartime inflation.

618. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 35-36.

619. Hiraoka Akitoshi, *Ahōdori to 'teikoku' Nihon*, 203.

620. Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 70.

621. *Ibid.*, 60.

622. *Ibid.*, 70.

dispute between workers and management had to be resolved by transporting the disputants to the prefectural office on the main island of Okinawa.<sup>623</sup>

A pronounced ethnic division ran through the Rasa Island workforce. The mine's managerial staff predominantly hailed from Hachijōjima in the Izu Islands, but the company adopted a policy of recruiting laborers exclusively from Okinawa Prefecture. Tsunetō explained that this was because workers from the Japanese mainland had “a tendency to dislike the island existence” and were “unfit for the climate, being easily attacked by illness.”<sup>624</sup> And Okinawa as a recruitment destination had the obvious advantage of proximity to Rasa Island. But it was also the case that Okinawa, as the poorest of Japan's prefectures (then and now), possessed a large pool of potential migrant workers who could be hired for less than their compatriots in “Japan proper”.

As the story of Okinawa's incorporation into the Japanese nation state has by and large been a sorry one, it is might be tempting to chalk up the Rasa Island mine as yet another instance of indigenous Okinawans being exploited by an imperialistic Japanese metropole.<sup>625</sup>

623. Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*, 35. According to the company, the dispute was a result of "a discrepancy of opinions concerning the contract price of truck transportation of phosphate rock [which] arose between the officers and the workmen.... Misunderstanding was the cause of the whole incident."

624. *Ibid.*, 15, 20.

625. Throughout the Tokugawa period the Ryūkyū Kingdom enjoyed a substantial degree of autonomy, negotiated through indirect tributary relationships with both the Qing and Tokugawa governments. But in 1879 the Meiji government unilaterally decided to incorporate the kingdom into the central Japanese polity as Okinawa Prefecture. In the final months of the Pacific War the Japanese military high command made the decision to sacrifice the people of the islands as “shattered jewels”, hoping that a resolute defense against military invasion would convince the United States to agree to a negotiated end to the war. After 1945 the islands were placed under U.S. military rule, becoming (in the memorable words of the American ambassador) a “colony of a million Japanese” until 1971. (See [Chapter Five](#)) At the time of writing Okinawa continues to host the vast bulk of US military forces stationed in Japan, to the great chagrin of many Okinawans. Hiraoki Sato, “Gyokusai or ‘Shattering Like

Yet core-periphery models of imperial exploitation fail to account for the global movement of Okinawan migrant laborers during this period. The first half of the twentieth century saw Okinawans emigrating to a wide variety of locales across the Pacific Rim, both inside and outside the Japanese imperial ambit. Okinawans travelled to work in Japan Proper, as well as to Taiwan and the Japanese South Pacific Mandate, to the sugar-cane plantations of Hawaii, and even as far afield as Peru and New Caledonia.<sup>626</sup> There was nothing inherently imperialistic about these labor patterns. At worst Okinawans might be seen as forming part of a global immiserated proletariat, compelled by local poverty to do grueling work far from home. But Adam McKeown urges caution on this point: to characterize migrant workers as passive victims of global capitalism would be no less schematic than to valorize them as free agents willingly entering the labor market.<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, in the fragmentary historical material through which we can glimpse Okinawan laborers' own historical perspective, there is scant evidence of anything approaching concern for the "environmental degradation" of Rasa Island and its birdlife. It would be overly hasty to assume that they viewed their own suffering as aligned in any way with that of the birds whose shit they shoveled.

Finally, what can be said of the ecological state of Rasa Island itself? As John McNeill has argued, Pacific islands pose a special challenge for environmental historians, as they were for the most part "born barren of life, basaltic pimples on the sea's surface", and all

a Jewel': Reflection on the Pacific War," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (9 February 2008)

626. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, 157-158; Moriyama, *Imingaisha*, 135.

627. Adam McKeown, "The Social Life of Chinese Labor," in *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 63.

lifeforms that dwell on them trace their descent from invaders.<sup>628</sup> Albatrosses, no less than humans, live in colonies after all. But for the sake of argument let us accept, as many ecologists do, that the island's bird population serves as a meaningful proxy for its ecological health in general.<sup>629</sup> Photos taken during the early years of the Rasa mine's operation show flocks of wheeling birds, and one unfortunate pelican ended up stuffed and mounted on a chunk of phosphate at the 1914 Taishō Exhibition. (See [Figure 4.9](#)) But these bird colonies do not seem to have survived three decades of opencast mining on the island. By the time a garrison of soldiers arrived to defend Rasa during the closing stages of the Pacific War, they saw “not a single tree nor blade of grass”. In his memoir of the fourteen months he spent on the island, their commander made not a single mention of birdlife - though food was so scarce that, had birds been plentiful, the soldiers would surely have eaten them.<sup>630</sup>

If evidence of the mining operation's ecological impact on Rasa is hard to come by, then the prehistory of the island is quite literally a blank slate. No archaeological surveys have ever been conducted in sufficient detail to estimate the age and size of Rasa's bird population from the accumulated sedimentary evidence.<sup>631</sup> (Though even in the few places where such excavations have been conducted, they have failed to yield a conclusive chronology.)<sup>632</sup> Any reconstruction of Rasa's “state of nature” would be forced to rely on generic

628. John. R. McNeill, “Of Rats and Men: A Synoptic Environmental History of the Island Pacific,” *Journal of World History* 5, no. 2 (1994), 301.

629. Christa P. H. Mulder, *Seabird Islands: Ecology, Invasion, and Restoration* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

630. Morita Yoshio, *Rasa-tō shubitai ki: gyokusai o kakugo shita heishitacji no ningen dorama* (Tokyo: Kōjinsha NF Bunko, 96, 114. The soldiers, Morita recalled, subsisted largely on a diet of fish, supplemented with a few chickens and rabbits and some vegetables grown on a meager plot.

631. Y. Oinouye, “Phosphates of Japan,” *Reserves Mondiales en Phosphates* 2(1928)

632. Hutchinson, “Biogeochemistry,” 70.

models of guano island ecology developed from other parts of the world, in which bird populations fluctuate violently in response to the availability of marine plankton, in turn a function of ocean temperature. The El Niño weather system, for instance, has been identified as a likely cause of the many observed “catastrophes”, in which avian populations collapse precipitously over the course of a single breeding season.<sup>633</sup> If these models have any applicability to Rasa, then it is likely that the island's avian population experienced their integration into the sovereign polity of the Japanese nation state less as a Fall from Eden than as one more in a series of stochastic disruptions.

All such speculation is, needless to say, a poor substitute for the testament of the birds themselves. Alas, in the historical record the voice of Rasa's albatrosses yawns like an abyss.

633. *Ibid.*, 49,152. In other words, no matter how compelling the circumstantial evidence, the activities of the Rasa Co., cannot necessarily be identified as the sole culprit in the destruction of the island's bird population.

## 5. Saving the Japanese Albatross

### Wildlife and Sovereignty Conservation in Postwar Japan

*Tokugawa Attitudes Toward Birdlife*

*Wild Birds and National Treasures, 1880-1930*

*Japanese Ornithology: An Aristocratic Pursuit*

*SCAP Promotes Nature and Democracy in Postwar Japan*

*The Resurrection of the Japanese Albatross*

*Developing Remote Islands in Post-imperial Japan*

*Torishima from Colony to Wilderness, 1902-1965*

On 15 February 1929, over forty years after Tamaoki Han'emon established his albatross culling colony on Torishima, the Marquis Yamashina Yoshimaro alighted on the island in search of rare birds. He had come to the right place. Once, so many birds had nested on Torishima that Tamaoki's hunters had been able to kill 100,000 per season, enough that a dedicated rail cart had been installed on the island to facilitate the transport of the carcasses. Yamashina was able to count less than 2,000. In an article for the ornithology journal *Tori* the following year, he wrote that "Through sports hunting and collecting expeditions, I have killed enough living things to count as someone with a great deal of blood on my hands, but I could not bear to watch the butchering of these albatrosses. Only the word butchery can

vividly express that scene.... I want to stamp out this kind of entrenched/despicable [深い] industry from Japan as soon as possible."<sup>634</sup>

In 1958, prompted in large part by Yamashina's lobbying efforts, the Japanese government's Agency for Cultural Affairs officially declared the albatross nesting grounds on Torishima to be a "natural monument" of the nation.<sup>635</sup> This declaration was accompanied by a campaign to raise public awareness of the plight of wild birds. Front page editorials in national newspapers cherished the island as a bird "paradise"<sup>636</sup>, and sermonized about the importance of fostering love of nature in the hearts of the populace.<sup>637</sup> Bird Day was established in elementary schools across the country. In 1975, Japan Post decided to commemorate *Diomedea albatrus* (also known as Steller's Albatross) by emblazoning it upon the 20-sen stamp. (See [Figure 5.1](#))

How should we fathom this sea-change in Japanese attitudes toward the albatross? Conservationists and their allies in government and the media have generally described the effort to conserve the albatross as a trajectory of national moral renewal, in which the dark valley era of Tamaoki's state-sanctioned albatross culls gave way to a postwar commitment to save the species from the brink of extinction. And it is true that in the postwar era Japanese ornithologists without question made great efforts to raise public awareness about wildlife conservation in general, and about albatrosses in particular. Neither is there reason to doubt

634. Yamashina Yoshimaro, "Torishima kikō," *Tori* 31(1931): 8.

635. Japanese: *tokubetsu tennen kinenbutsu*. See Jōtani Yukio and Shirai Kunihiko, *Torishima no shizen to ahōdori* (Tokyo: Tōkyō-to Kyōiku Iinkai & Asashi Shimbunsha, 17 June 1961)

636. Japanese: *rakuen* 樂園.

637. Hasegawa Hiroshi, *50-wa kara 5000-wa e: ahōdori no kanzen fukkatsu o mezashite*.

the sincerity of their commitment to the cause, which for many amounted to a lifelong passion.

Nevertheless framing the story as a morality tale omits the distinctive class politics that tend to characterize wildlife conservation in practice, as well as the postcolonial context unique to postwar Japan. Like their counterparts in Britain and America, Japanese ornithologists tended to hail from elite backgrounds. This was partly because, as we saw in [Chapter Two](#), the discovery of new taxa required a great deal of spare time, plus the financial wherewithal to mount costly expeditions to remote parts of the world. But also, ornithology in Japan is unusual for being historically dominated not just by the wealthy, but by men of aristocratic lineage. Studying and advocating for the natural world provided such men with a means to carve out a new role in public life at a time when their hereditary privileges were being abolished. It enabled them to (as Bourdieu might put it) accumulate new reserves of symbolic capital even as old ones were being eroded.

Secondly, the campaign to save the Torishima albatross echoed shifting transnational attitudes toward wildlife management on the part of states and the scientific elites who advised them. In fact, the very notion of using commitment to nature conservation as an index of a nation's civilizational level was imported during this period, mostly from the United States. The circumstances under which this notion was introduced to Japan were particular to the nation's linked experience of defeat, occupation and territorial contraction after the Pacific War. The Allied Occupation provided American ornithologists with an unparalleled opportunity to impose on their vanquished enemy a version of their own ideology of Nature. Their Japanese counterparts, men like Yamashina Yoshimaro, seized on

this opportunity eagerly, espousing wildlife conservation to the public as a way for their country to demonstrate its reintegration into the postwar international community.

Last but not least, the economic, geopolitical and tectonic shifts that occurred after Japan's defeat in World War II devastated the viability of offshore island settlements like Torishima, sharply lowering the opportunity cost of bird conservation. "Saving" albatrosses became a convenient way for the Japanese state to rebuild its international credibility whilst constructing a new narrative of Torishima as a pristine wilderness under its sovereign control. The implications of this new means of enacting sovereignty are still being played out today in contested territories around the world.

This first part of this chapter will begin by describing Japanese attitudes toward bird protection from the Tokugawa period until the 1930s. The second part will discuss Yamashina Yoshimaro's early attempts to protect Torishima's albatrosses, before analyzing the impact of the Allied Occupation on Japan's postwar bird conservation movement. The third part of this chapter will discuss postwar efforts to transform the Izu Islands from a launchpad of Japanese colonialism/imperialism in the Pacific into a destination for nature tourism. The fourth part will survey the history of Torishima from the island's eruption in 1902 until the present day.

### **Tokugawa Attitudes Toward Birdlife**

Nothing approximating the concept of wildlife conservation existed in Tokugawa Japan. The closest equivalent practice can be found in the game reserves maintained by shoguns and domainal lords for the purposes of hawking. As Tsukamoto Manabu has shown, hawks and hunting played a prominent role within Edo period warrior culture, and a series of regulations

proliferated dictating closed seasons particular areas, and stipulating who (usually lords or domainal retainers) had the right to hunt certain species.<sup>638</sup> And Japanese aesthetic culture contained a great deal of appreciation for birds. Descriptions of birds can be found in the later *Manyōshū* (c.759), the collection of poems seen as marking the beginnings of "Japanese" literature. A rich set of poetic and even mystical meanings accreted around certain species: the crane was associated with good luck; the pheasant represented marital fidelity or familial order; sparrows were frequently represented as a messengers from the other world. Certain migratory species were linked to seasons, or to moments in the agricultural calendar. The first cry of the cuckoo was said to signal the beginning of rice planting, for example.<sup>639</sup> As Martha Chaiklin has shown, merchants in Osaka and Edo partook of a brisk trade in rare and exotic bird specimens, some of them even imported from Southeast Asia via Nagasaki.<sup>640</sup>

But these disparate practices, even if taken together, do not amount to anything approximating contemporary understandings of wildlife conservation. For one thing, there was little reason to suspect the biota of this not-wilderness faced imminent destruction. Notwithstanding the circulation of works by Cuvier and Buffon among communities of Dutch studies scholars, Tokugawa Japanese were unfamiliar with the concept of extinction.<sup>641</sup> The few Japanese thinkers who grappled with the concept of biodiversity tended if anything

638. Tsukamoto Manabu. *Shōrui o meguru seiji* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1983)

639. Haruo Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 116-118.

640. Martha Chaiklin, "Exotic Bird Collecting in Early Modern Japan" in Gregory M. Pflugfelder and Brett L. Walker, *Japanimals: History and Culture in Japan's Animal Life* (University of Michigan, 2005)

641. James R. Bartholomew, *The Formation of Science in Japan: Building a Research Tradition* (Yale University Press, 1989), 71; Scott L. Montgomery, *Science in Translation: Movements of Knowledge Through Cultures and Time* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 221.

to draw something close to the opposite conclusion. Hiraga Gennai, reluctant to countenance that medicinal ginseng could only be procured via importation from abroad, maintained that “once the remotest areas of our country have been exhaustively explored, there will not be substances among those we currently import from China that are not found here”.<sup>642</sup>

More fundamentally, however, Tokugawa Japanese lacked even the *concept* of wilderness. Without the Romantic association between and Nature and Liberty ("A robin red breast in a cage / Sets all of heaven in a rage" - see [Chapter Two](#)), there was little sense that birds were best appreciated outside of captivity. For instance, though Buddhist-derived devotional practices included the purchase and release of captured birds for karmic reward, the beneficence of such acts was thought to lie not in granting the benighted creatures their freedom but simply in sparing them from slaughter.<sup>643</sup> Neither was there any appreciation of the Sublime, an aesthetic innovation first diagnosed by eighteenth century thinkers such as Immanuel Kant or Edmund Burke (See [Chapter Two](#)). A post-Kantian such as you or I is capable of appreciating a mountain or a seascape confident that:

our rational faculty is capable of *thinking* of infinity in spite of the inability of our sensible faculty to grasp it. Our appreciation of the powerful aspects of nature is brought about by a similar recognition. While the power of nature may have dominion over our physical being we have ultimate dominion over nature due to our super-sensible faculty of reason which is free from those causal laws governing the phenomenal world.<sup>644</sup>

642. Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 223.

643. Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*, 119-120.

644. Yuriko Saito, “The Japanese Appreciation of Nature,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 25, no. 3 (1985), 242.

It is this confidence in our ability to comprehend the "wilderness" that generates our appreciation of it. But as Yuriko Saito argues, pre-Meiji Japanese had no concept of the Sublime - not because the Japanese environment failed to provoke terror in them, but rather because they did not see in such terror any cause for aesthetic reverie. Saito gives as an example the classic print, "In the Well of a Wave off Kanagawa" (See [Figure 5.2](#)):

Even when a rough sea is depicted in visual art (which is not frequent), it never gives the impression of ferociousness. Take, for example, the famous wood block print by Katsushika Hokusai of a gigantic wave almost swallowing boats, with Mount Fuji seen at a distance. While the represented state of affairs might be horrifying, the work does not convey such a feeling at all. Although highly evocative of dynamic movement, because of a fairly contrived and calculated composition with a distant Mount Fuji as a static focal point, this print gives us a feeling which is neither insecure nor dreadful.<sup>645</sup>

When premodern Japanese peered beyond their coastal fisheries, or the peripheral mountainsides where they gathered fuel, fodder and fertilizer (see [Chapter Four](#)), they perceived merely a hostile domain inhabited by all manner of unknowable beings ranging from boar and wolves to trolls and mountain goblins, demons and gods. There is scant evidence that they found the sensation to be a pleasant one.

Amongst the creatures that flitted into view on the edge of the Tokugawa world, we catch occasional glimpses of albatrosses. Specimens which correspond to present-day albatross taxa are reproduced in Tokugawa period bestiaries such as *Hotta kimpū* and *Baien*

645. *Ibid.*, 241. Saito continues: "Likewise, creatures depicted by the Japanese are often small, harmless ones such as butterflies, warblers, copper pheasants, cuckoos. On the other hand, ferocious, life-endangering animals such as tigers are frequently objects of appreciation in other traditions. Indeed, in the Japanese tradition we do not find a praise for 'forests filled with wild beasts'; instead there is a constant appreciation of things which are 'small, gentle and intimate'."

*kinpu*.<sup>646</sup> (See [Figures 5.3 & 5.4](#)) During his time teaching medicine in Japan, Philipp von Siebold procured two specimens that he identified as *Diomedea Brachyura*.<sup>647</sup> The birds had been caught off the coast of the Izu Peninsula (the vantage point, incidentally, from whence Hokusai's Wave is depicted). As this provenance suggests, albatrosses were most frequently encountered by fishermen, who gave them a dizzying variety of names: including *umi-kamome*, meaning simply as "sea-gull"<sup>648</sup>; *oki no taifu*, meaning "offshore minister"; and *dainan-kamome*, which translates roughly as "the bird you see when you're so far out to sea that you're probably in trouble". But the most frequent names used to describe the birds were derogatory ones, most commonly *ahodori* or *bakadori*, meaning just "stupid bird".<sup>649</sup> Much like the moniker of "dodo" that Dutch sailors gave to the flightless birds of Mauritius, this seems to have referred to the birds' lack of suspicion toward humans, which made them rather easy to catch and kill.

646. Hotta Masaatsu and Suzuki Michio, *Edo chōrui daizukan : yomigaeru Edo chōgaku no seika "kanbun kinpu"* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2006)

647. Philipp Franz von Siebold, *Fauna Japonica, 1823-1830* (Müller, 1833), 132. Siebold identified the specimens as belonging to *Diomedea brachyura*, as taxon that has since been incorporated into *D. albatrus* (Pallas). The current taxonomical consensus is therefore that Siebold's birds, presently in the collection of Leiden University, belong to the same species as those collected by Steller during his ill-fated voyage to Kamchatka with Bering. (See [Chapter Two](#))

648. I am indebted here to Alexander Vovin, who in an invaluable posting to the Premodern Japanese Studies mailing list pointed out that the Wamyōshō defines *kamome* simply as *suichō* ("waterfowl") as opposed to the modern Japanese definition of *kaichō* ("seabird")

649. Sugawara Hiroshi and Kakizawa Ryōzō, *Zusetsu chōmei no yurai jiten* (Tokyo: Kashiwashobō, 2005) A variant from Tosa Domain on the Pacific coast of Shikoku is *tōkurō*, also implying stupidity.

## Wild Birds and National Treasures, 1880-1930

Political reforms during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) transformed Japanese hunting practices, stimulating a dramatic increase in the number of birds killed for commercial purposes. Partly this was due to the *de facto* nationalization of forestland by the Meiji State. Commercial hunters had operated widely during the Tokugawa period, catering to a brisk demand for bird flesh. (One Edo cookbook ranked the bird meats from tastiest to least palatable, beginning with crane, followed by swan, wild goose, wild duck, and finally chicken.)<sup>650</sup> But they had generally done so with the permission of the village-level authorities which governed commons usage, offering their services as eradicators of pests and dangerous animals in exchange for permission to hunt game in the vicinity.<sup>651</sup> The central government's decision to designate formerly locally-administered land as "imperial forest" demolished such relationships, whilst failing to effectively deter hunters from poaching on the newly nationalized land.<sup>652</sup> The result was to render bird-hunting a free-for-all activity at the very moment when the global market for decorative plumage was beginning to surge in value.<sup>653</sup>

The Meiji government introduced the first game regulations for Japan as a whole in 1873, introducing a licensing system for hunting with guns. This early legislation was intended less to conserve bird populations than to regulate gun ownership in the face of

650. Shirane, *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*, 118.

651. For a discussion of hunters in Tokugawa Japan, see Taguchi Hiromi, "Rettō kaitaku to shuryō no ayumi," *Tōhoku-gaku* 3(2000); Taguchi Hiromi, "Matagi – Nihon rettō ni okeru nōgyō no kakudai to shuryō no ayumi," *Chigaku Zasshi* 113, no. 2 (2004).

652. Conrad Totman puts it boldly when he claims that "the Meiji government's 1870-1880s program of woodland reorganisation created the greatest conflict between government and people in the entire history of Japan." Totman, *Japan's Imperial Forest*, 101.

653. As we saw in [Chapter One](#), Japanese feather exports increased dramatically in the 1880s, primarily via the treaty ports of Yokohama and Kobe, to cater to demand from milliners based in Paris, London and New York.

ongoing civil unrest - throughout the 1870s the young regime was preoccupied with fending off a series of armed challenges to its authority, including the Chichibu Rebellion and the Satsuma Uprising/Southwestern War. For instance, the 1873 regulations issued no restrictions on hunting with nets, despite this being the technique favored by the overwhelming majority of hunters in Japan at the time.<sup>654</sup> It was not until 1892 that the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce issued a more comprehensive set of regulations that required net-hunters as well as gun-hunters to purchase licenses. Three years later these regulations were revised to include a list of bird species that were permissible to hunt.<sup>655</sup> This dramatically expanded the state's theoretical authority over birds within its territorial borders: previously all birds had been considered fair game unless explicitly prohibited; now birds were to be considered off-limits unless explicitly indicated otherwise. However the rationale for bird conservation, the sustainable management of populations for the benefit of hunting, remained stubbornly un-Romantic, and in this sense there was little change from the Tokugawa era..

This began to change in the interwar period, with the passage of the Historical Remains, Scenic Place and Natural Monument Preservation Law in 1919.<sup>656</sup> This legislation was largely the product of lobbying efforts by the botanist Miyoshi Manabu, who been impressed by similar initiatives implemented in Germany whilst he was studying there from 1891 to 1895. Efforts by federal states such as Prussia and Bavaria to codify and protect the cultural and natural heritage (*kulturdenkmal* and *naturdenkmal*) of the nation contained a strong dose of Late Romantic thinking, in which the nation was imagined not as a civically constituted community but as an entity ordained by Nature. (See [Chapter Two](#)) Among the

654. Rinyachō, *Chōjū gyōsei no ayumi* (Tokyo: Rinya Kōsai-kai, 1979), 5-6.

655. *Ibid.*, 15.

656. Uchida Seinosuke, *Tennen kinenbutsu: chōrui-hen* (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1960), 9.

earliest German natural monuments, for example, were the Hercynian forests (purportedly primeval, in fact of relatively recent planting) from whence the Teutonic Volk was said to have emerged.<sup>657</sup> Following the passage of the 1919 law, the Japanese Interior Ministry likewise set out to canonize the heritage of the nation. At least initially, however, the ministry's notion of natural heritage did not owe much to the concept of wilderness as such. The earliest bird species designated as natural monuments tended to be those that had accreted aesthetic value according to indigenous Japanese culture, such as cranes or the fighting cocks of Tosa.<sup>658</sup>

The cult of wilderness only began to gain any kind of purchase in Japanese aesthetic culture in the 1930s. In 1934 a number of ornithologists and prominent intellectuals founded the Japan Wild Bird Association (*Nihon Yachō no Kai*), an organization dedicated to promulgating the idea that birds were best appreciated in their "natural" environment, i.e. outside of captivity. (In fact the very word *yachō*, meaning "wild bird", was a portmanteau neologism introduced into the Japanese language at this time.<sup>659</sup>) One prominent founding member was the renowned ethnographer Yanagita Kunio, who took a keen interest in the role of birds in folk culture. Another was the painter Araki Jippō, an exemplar of the "birds-and-flowers" school which had been introduced to Japan from China in the Muromachi period

657. Michael Imort, "A Sylvan People: Wilhelmine Forestry and the Forest as a Symbol of Germandom", 55-80 in Lekan and Zeller, *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*.

658. Uchida Seinosuke, "Bunkazai tennen kinenbutsu: dōbutsu" (1951).

659. Nakanishi Godō, *Aichō jiden* (Heibonsha, 1993), 478-480 cited in Toshihiro Higuchi, "Birds for New Japan: Bird Conservation and Reforms, 1934-1952," *Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference* (2010): 11. *Yachō* derives from *yasei chōjū* (野生鳥獸), and if Nakanishi did not necessarily coin the term, he certainly popularized it.

(1336-1573).<sup>660</sup> But the majority of intellectuals who joined the JWBA were scholars of English-language literature, men such as Taketomo Sōfū, Togawa Shūkotsu and Hirata Tokuboku.<sup>661</sup> The JWBA was founded by Nakanishi Godō, a poet and lay Buddhist, who was by his own account heavily influenced by American Romantic poets such as Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. Nakanishi undertook a translation of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* into Japanese, and in 1929 he recreated his own Walden's Pond experience, spending several months in seclusion in the countryside outside Tokyo.<sup>662</sup>

The sensibilities of the JWBA's early membership were thus informed by a particularly Anglo-American strain of Romanticism, that associated wilderness with escape from the corrosion of human civilization. A typical Nakanishi poem described "the white-rumped swift on the unpeopled island, roosting hidden by white cliffs...the only human lamp coming from the fisherman's seasonal hut"<sup>663</sup> Significantly, in Nakanishi's vast oeuvre of poems about birds, he wrote not only about places like the Tōno Valley, where Yanagita had located the essence of the Japanese *volk*, but also about the frontier prefecture of Hokkaido and the Okhotsk coastline. In her analysis of modern Japanese discourse about Nature, Julia Adeney Thomas writes that "by the 1930s, the changeover to a nationalized nature, no longer

660. Nakanishi Godō, *Aichō jiden*, 468-480 cited in Higuchi, "Birds for New Japan," 10. The point here is not to assert that Yanagita's ethnography and Araki's paintings somehow represented a more "authentic" rendering of traditional Japanese culture. Yanagita's search for an authentic Japanese folk culture clearly owed much to Germanic predecessors such as the Grimm Brothers. Similarly, genres such as the birds-and-flowers school (*kachōga* 花鳥画) acquired powerful new valences when reproduced by anti-modernist painters in the twentieth century. Rather, the aim here is to distinguish, in the cult of "wilderness", a particularly Anglo-American strain of Romanticism which percolated into Japan during the 1930s.

661. *Ibid.*, 10.

662. Nakanishi Godō, *Aichō jiden*.

663. Nakanishi Godō, "Kinkazan oki, Ashijima" in *Yachōki dai 16-kan: shishū*, 151-152.

progressive or even universal, was complete... Japan existed in a coalescent intimacy with a nature known to itself alone."<sup>664</sup> And it is true that the political implications of Nakanishi's State of Nature were subtly different. Whereas Thoreau had compared himself to a captive rooster, alerting the world to the joys of freedom, for Nakanishi the wilderness served to preach the virtues of communalism: he wanted to "bring people to their homeland of nature, transcend a custom of private possession, and create a custom of public possession."<sup>665</sup> But still, the activities of the JWBA suggest that the "nationalized nature" which began to emerge in interwar Japan owed no small debt to tropes of wilderness imported from America, Britain and Germany.

### **Japanese Ornithology: An Aristocratic Pursuit**

Ornithologists also played a significant role in the Japan Wild Bird Association, not least of all the young Marquis Yamashina Yoshimaro. Like a great many Japanese birders of his generation, Yamashina was of aristocratic extraction.<sup>666</sup> In fact Yamashina was born a Prince.

He was the uncle, and childhood playmate, of the Shōwa Emperor (himself a keen marine

664. Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001), 30. In fact Thomas explicitly excludes "ecological" discourse about Nature from her analysis, on the grounds that "nature's implications for society - its prescription for the relations of power among human beings - mattered far more to most Meiji and Taisho writers than its scientific or ecological import." See Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, 6.

665. Nakanishi Godō, *Yachō o tazunete* (Tokyo: Nisshin Shoin, 1942), 207; Nakanishi Godō, *Aichō jiden*, 477 cited in Higuchi, "Birds for New Japan."

666. Aristocrats played an conspicuously large role in the formation of ornithology as a discipline in Japan. Of the sixteen articles published in the first ever edition of the Japanese ornithological journal *Tori* in 1915, seven were penned by men of aristocratic heritage: Takatsukasa Nobusuke, Matsudaira Yorinari, and Kuroda Nagamichi. Kuroda's son Nagahisa served as Oliver O. Austin's assistant during the Occupation, and would later succeed Yamashina as head of the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology. *Tori* 1:1 (1915). See also Isono Naohide, *Tonosama seibutsugaku keifu* (Tokyo: Kagaku Asahi Henshūbu, 1991).

biologist, although this fact was not widely publicized until after 1945). A 1920 revision to the Imperial Household Law downgraded Yamashina from princely status to that of a mere Marquis. Eventually, when the peerage was abolished by the postwar Occupation government, he would be stripped even of this. But what Yamashina lost in one form of symbolic capital he made up for by acquiring another, through becoming Japan's foremost ornithologist and bird conservationist.

Yamashina's interest in birds began when he was a child: he would later recall the joy he took in observing the geese gathered on the lawns of the Imperial Palace in the centre of Tokyo.<sup>667</sup> As a young man he enlisted as an officer in the Japanese Imperial Army, the expected career path for Japanese aristocrats (his father had played a pivotal role in the Boshin War which restored the Meiji Emperor to power.) But his actual participation in military life was sporadic, frequently interrupted by leisure travel including a great number of hunting trips and bird collecting expeditions. In 1929 he dropped out of the army altogether, to enrol as an irregular student in the zoology department of Tokyo Imperial University. After two years of study he established his own private laboratory on family-owned land in Shibuya, Tokyo, in 1932. Later he would expand this into the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, which would come to house a collection of over 60,000 bird specimens.<sup>668</sup> (See [Figure 5.5](#))

Yamashina's career as described so far bears a striking resemblance to that of Walter Rothschild. Both were young men endowed with considerable financial and social capital, who chose to devote a significant chunk of that capital to the pursuit and classification of

667. Yamashina Yoshimaro, *Tori no heru kuni fueru kuni: Ōbei tori angya* (Tokyo: Nihon Chōrui Hogo Renmei, 207-208.

668. Aoki Eiji, *Yamashina Yoshimaro no shōgai* (Tokyo: Yamashina chōrui kenkyūjo, 1982)

exotic birds. But if Rothschild's aim was to produce a definitive catalogue of Hawaiian avifauna, then Yamashina's ambition was nothing less than to become a Japanese John James Audubon. In 1933 he embarked on a planned five-volume *A Natural History of Japanese Birds*.<sup>669</sup> Only two volumes of this opus were published before the outbreak of the Pacific War interrupted the project, but the intention was clear enough: to produce a comprehensive reference work for all bird species found within the fast-expanding boundaries of the Japanese Empire.

Yamashina was far from being the first to attempt such a task - in fact as a young boy he read and annotated assiduously Blakiston's *Birds of Japan*, first published in 1882.<sup>670</sup> Rather, Yamashina sought to distinguish his effort by scouring the further flung reaches of the empire for specimens which had hitherto escaped the taxonomical gaze. For the purposes of his project Yamashina divided Japan into three zones. The northern zone comprised the four "inner"<sup>671</sup> islands of Honshū, Shikoku, Kyūshū and Hokkaidō, but also the Kurile Islands (annexed 1875), the Bonin Islands (1876), the Volcano Islands (1891), Sakhalin (1905), and Korea (1910). There was also an Oriental Zone<sup>672</sup> that comprised the Amami Islands and the Ryūkyū Islands (annexed 1879) and Taiwan (1895), and an Australasian Zone including the Marianas, the Carolines, the Marshall Islands and Palau, all of which had been seized by Japan during World War I and governed as a League of Nations Mandate (see [Chapter](#)

669. Yamashina Yoshimaro, *Nihon no chorui to sono seitai* (Tokyo: Azusa Shobo, 1934)

670. Thomas Blakiston and H. Pryer, *Birds of Japan* (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1882) Yamashina's annotated copy of Blakiston is housed at the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology.

671. Japanese: *honpō naichi* 本邦内地.

672. Japanese: *tōyōku* 東洋区.

[Four](#)).<sup>673</sup> Just as Audubon had sought to provide a taxonomical underpinning for the fast-expanding United States, so would Yamashina catalogue the new biodiversity riches of Greater Japan, and in doing so construct for the patchwork imperial polity a coherent basis in Nature.

This is not to imply that Yamashina was a jingo. His pre-1945 writings were confined strictly to ornithological matters, and contained none of the lyrical sense of manifest destiny that infused Audubon's *Ornithological Biography*. But even if Yamashina cared *only* about birds he nevertheless, like so many other ornithologists, took advantage of his polity's territorial and imperial expansion in order to secure specimens and construct taxa. Yamashina's ambit during this period was in fact circumscribed rather tightly by the Japanese Empire: he did not once travel outside its borders during the prewar period.

By his own account, Yamashina's damascene conversion to the cause of wildlife was prompted by his visit to Torishima, described at the opening of this chapter.<sup>674</sup> Soon after returning to Tokyo he began to lobby for the Japanese government to implement measures to protect the island's albatross colony, which he feared would soon be wiped out. He explicitly compared the "butchery" of the Torishima settlers with that of the Japanese bird hunters on Laysan Island as described by William Hornaday - suggesting that even at this early stage he

673. Yamashina Yoshimaro, *Nihon no chorui to sono seitai*.

674. Yamashina was not the first Japanese naturalist to describe the albatrosses of Torishima. Hattori Tōru had visited the island in 1888 (soon after Tamaoki Han'emon annexed the island to Japan), and provided a detailed account of the birds as well as the burgeoning industry focussed on culling them. But it is testament both to Torishima's remoteness and to the general lack of Japanese scientific interest in the birds, that little else was written about them in the intervening four decades. See Hattori Tōru, "Bakadori no hanashi."

had internalized the American critique of Japanese people as particularly barbarous in their treatment of wildlife.<sup>675</sup>

Yamashina was unable to persuade the central government to remove Steller's Albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*) from its list of authorized game birds, but he did score a limited success in convincing the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to declare a ten-year hunting ban on Torishima, for the purpose of allowing the albatross population on the island to recover.<sup>676</sup> (Hasegawa Hiroshi speculates that Yamashina was able to achieve this through the intervention of Uchida Seinosuke, an ornithologist who taught at Tokyo Imperial University and also served as head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's bird research laboratory.)<sup>677</sup> But even this was only a token measure: the main threat to Torishima's albatrosses now came not from hunting, but from a scheme (launched in 1932) to develop their nesting site as pastureland for cattle. In fact the ban was, if anything, probably counter-productive. The islanders of Torishima, getting wind of the impending ban, embarked on a concerted effort to kill as many albatrosses as possible before it was implemented. When Yamashina's assistant returned to Torishima in the spring of 1933, the island's school teacher informed him that some three thousand birds had been slaughtered over the course of the winter nesting season.<sup>678</sup>

The bird cull did not quite spell the end of the Torishima albatross colony: an article published in the Hachijōjima Times early in 1939 reported some 1500 albatrosses as still

675. Yamashina Yoshimaro, "Torishima kikō."; William Temple Hornaday, *Hornaday's American Natural History* (Charles Scribner's sons, 1927), 242.

676. Nōrinshō kokuji dai 290-gō, 4 August 1933.

677. Hasegawa Hiroshi, personal correspondence with author.

678. Yamashina Yoshimaro, "Izu Shichitō no chōrui," *Tori* 11, no. 54 (December 1942), 244-245. The other islanders denied any knowledge of such a cull, claiming only that a violent storm had reduced the numbers of albatrosses on the island.

living on the island.<sup>679</sup> But in the summer of that same year, Torishima erupted again.<sup>680</sup> This time the entire human population was evacuated safely, along with their livestock; but the albatross nesting site was smothered in a lava flow to a depth of some thirty to a hundred feet. Writing in *Tori* during the war, at a time when travel to the island was nigh-on impossible, Yamashina expressed his belief that this second eruption had:

doubtless delivered the final, fatal blow to the albatrosses of Torishima, hovering as they did on the brink of extinction. [...] Torishima seems to have been nearly the only breeding site for *Diomedea albatrus*. In which case I suspect this means that [this species of] albatross has not only ceased to nest on Torishima, but has befallen a truly tragic fate.<sup>681</sup>

### **SCAP Promotes Nature and Democracy in Postwar Japan**

In 1949, four years after Japan's unconditional surrender in August 1945, and at the height of the Allied Occupation of the country, the Torishima Albatross was declared extinct. And this declaration was issued by no less august a personage than the head of the Wildlife Branch of the Natural Resources Section of the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers. His name was Oliver L. Austin Jr, and he happened to be both a keen birder and - as a Harvard alumnus who summered at Cape Cod - a member of the closest thing American society has to aristocracy.<sup>682</sup> As such he got on extremely well with the community of ornithologists in Japan, with whom he shared not just a passion for birds but also a somewhat similar class

679. "Kimi yo shiru - minami no umi no paradaisu 'Ahōdori no Torishima'" *Nankai Taimusu*, 13 March 1939.

680. "Torishima kyū funkakō bakuhatsu! Hatsuka zen dekasegibito munen no hikiage" *Nankai Taimusu*, 23 August 1939.

681. Yamashina Yoshimaro, "Izu Shichitō no chōrui," 245; Austin Jr, "The Status of Steller's Albatross," 288.

682. Mary H. Clench and J. William Hardy, "In Memoriam: Oliver L. Austin Jr.," *The Auk* 106, no. 4 (October 1989), 706-709.

background. Over the course of his stint in Japan, his family fraternized socially with theirs, and they went on frequent bird hunting trips together. (See [Figures 5.6](#), [5.7](#) & [5.8](#))

It was during this time that Austin developed his own personal theory of Japanese history, which he outlined in a 1947 memo titled “Importance of Wildlife to the Mission of the Occupation”. According to Austin, Japan's barbaric treatment of birds was a throwback to the era when wildlife had belonged exclusively to feudal lords, and was symptomatic of the country being mired in a militaristic, feudal stage of development. Modern democracy, by contrast, “rejects any individual claim of ownership over natural things and considers birds and animals as nature’s gifts for all people on an equal basis.”<sup>683</sup>

After connecting wildlife protection with democratic values, Austin then went on to argue that the causal link ran both ways: promoting a love of wildlife in the hearts of Japanese youth was essential for instilling the spirit of democracy in the defeated nation. It would also help to prevent Occupation era measures to conserve wildlife from being repealed once Japan regained its independence.<sup>684</sup> With this in mind, he began working to establish civil society institutions that might help to promote wildlife conservation in postwar Japan. In

November 1945 he invited a select group of Japanese ornithologists, including Yamashina

683. NARA-II College Park, RG331, Box 8981, Wildlife, vol. 1, 1946-1948, Oliver L. Austin Jr., “Importance of Wildlife to the Mission of the Occupation” (2 June 1947), cited in Higuchi, “Birds for New Japan,” 22.

684. SCAP enacted a number of policies to conserve wild birds in Japan, including whittling down the list of permitted game species, and banning the use of nets (the preferred method of Japanese hunters, but seen as barbarically unsportsmanlike by Americans). SCAP’s stringent restrictions on civilian firearm ownership also inadvertently helped to protect Japan’s bird population. But Austin also told Uchida Seinōsuke that “if the reforms are to be permanent, they should be accomplished with as little SCAP interference as possible”. See Rinyachō, *Chōjū gyōsei no ayumi*, 326; Matsuyama Shirō, *Yachō to tomo ni 80 nen: kiitari mitari tameshitari* (Bun’ichi Sōgō Shuppan, 1997), 195; NARA-II College Park, RG331, Box 8981, Hunting, “Regulation of Game Laws by American Forces 1946”, “Conference with Dr. Uchida 1948”, “Japanese Game Laws 1948”, cited in Higuchi, “Birds for New Japan,” 24-25.

Yoshimaro, Takatsukasa Nobusuke and Kuroda Nagamichi (all aristocrats), to a conference at the Shimbashi Daiichi Hotel, at the time requisitioned for use by SCAP GHQ.<sup>685</sup> Austin urged the participants not just to revive the Japanese Wild Bird Association, which had become moribund during the war but to establish a Japanese equivalent of the Audubon Society or the RSPB (see [Chapter Two](#)), an organization dedicated not just to the appreciation of but also to the *conservation* of birds. Three months later, a conference sponsored by the Education Ministry announced the formation of a new society, the Japanese Society for the Preservation of Birds.<sup>686</sup>

With Austin's encouragement the JSPB membership, led by Yamashina Yoshimaro, set about lobbying to establish a National Bird Day in Japan.<sup>687</sup> Bird Days had originally been established in schools in several U.S. states in the 1890s, as part of a campaign to combat the moral malaise thought to be a product of the urban industrial environment (See [Chapter Two](#)).<sup>688</sup> But the Japanese iteration of Bird Day was innovative in that it explicitly connected an appreciation of Nature, manifested in the form of wild birds, with democratic values that the American occupiers perceived Japan to be lacking.<sup>689</sup> Bird Day<sup>690</sup> was adopted by the

685. Matsuyama Shirō, *Yachō to tomo ni 80 nen*, 205.

686. Japanese: Nihon Chōrui Hogo Renmeikai 日本鳥類保護連盟会 See *Ibid.*, 307.

687. Higuchi, "Birds for New Japan," 1.

688. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 32.

689. As Higuchi observes, another unique feature of Japanese Bird Day was its emphasis on the building of nesting boxes. Japanese ornithologists hoped that a plea for children to build shelters for homeless birds would resonate with the public, many of whom had also lost their homes as a result of wartime aerial bombing. A SCAP Wildlife Section internal memo assessed nest boxes as "of little practical value ecologically....Nevertheless the campaign deserves continuation, if only for its excellent propaganda value." NARA-II College Park RG331, Box 8981, Wildlife, vol. 1, 1946-1948. "Wildlife Conditions in Kyushu, Initial Report 18 April 1948" cited in Higuchi, "Birds for New Japan," 23.

690 Japanese: Bādo Dē バードデー.

Tokyo Metropolitan Government in April 1947, and expanded nationwide with the support of the Forestry Agency in 1950.<sup>691</sup>

Austin's position as head of Wildlife Section afforded him plenty of opportunities to travel, and in 1949 he embarked on a tour of the Bonin Islands aboard a SCAP-supervised Japanese whaling expedition, in search of the Torishima albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*).<sup>692</sup> The weather was too rough to make landfall on the island, but Austin failed to spot any birds from onboard ship; he declared based on this that the species was, to all intents and purposes, extinct. In the October 1949 issue of *Pacific Science* he wrote that:

We are loath to regard any species as extinct until every possibility of its survival has been investigated and exhausted... [But] I was able to sail within close inspecting distance of every island in this chain on which Steller's Albatross is known to have bred. I also visited every other island in this chain which could possibly support a breeding colony of birds... If Steller's Albatross were still breeding in this area, I should have seen some sign of it, either on the islands or the seas nearby... The chances that any of these fine birds remain alive today are remote indeed, unless they be a few old individuals perhaps beyond the breeding age, which spend all their time at sea and never come to the breeding islands.<sup>693</sup>

Not only did Austin's conclusion provide him with some kind of publishable result - an extinction is more attention-grabbing than simply a failed sighting, after all - it fit nicely with his established narrative: here was yet another bird species that was "a victim man's thoughtlessness and greed" in general, and primitive, rapacious Oriental predation in particular. In

691. Matsuyama Shirō, *Yachō to tomo ni 80 nen*, 307; Aoki Eiji, *Yamashina Yoshimaro no shōgai*, 216.

692. "SCAP Wildlife Expert Leaves For Torishima to Hunt Albatross" *Japan Times*, 1 April 1949.

693. Austin Jr, "The Status of Steller's Albatross," 293-294.

fact, Austin's certainty that Torishima's albatrosses had vanished was informed partly by his perception of Japanese hunting practices as inherently unsustainable:

Although their known former rookeries are all small isolated islands far off the beaten tracks of commerce, and extremely difficult to access, the waters surrounding them have swarmed with Japanese, Chinese and Okinawan fishermen for the last 50 years...it is hard to believe that any islet exists in this area which has not been visited many times by Oriental fishing boats in the 16 years since the last known Steller's Albatross was killed. It is equally unlikely that any of these craft would pass by an out-of-the way island with a bird on it without its crew attempting to land and kill the bird.<sup>694</sup>

### **The Resurrection of the Japanese Albatross**

And then in 1954, shortly after the Japanese nation regained its independence, the Torishima albatross arose miraculously from the ashes.<sup>695</sup> The rediscovery triggered a wave of what can with only mild exaggeration be described as albatross-mania. The symbolism of the event was too good to pass up: here was a species which a member of the occupying forces had declared vanished, an eternal victim of Japanese feudal barbarism, yet had been resurrected on the very eve of Japan regaining its independence. There followed an outpouring of media interest in the albatross, which invariably stressed the importance of diligently protecting this rare species. The Kyōdō Film Co. and NHK, Japan's public broadcasting corporation, both

694. *Ibid.*, 294.

695. In fact barely a year after the species had been declared extinct by Austin, crew members from a weather observatory newly established on the island had noticed some few dozen birds nesting on a ledge beneath a sheer south-facing cliff; but it took another three years before Ono Yoshiteru, an observatory employee who also happened to be a member of the Ornithological Society of Japan, arranged for "official" confirmation by dispatching a bird carcass to Tokyo. Shirai Kumihiko, "Torishima no chōrui" in Jōtani Yukio and Shirai Kunihiko, *Torishima no shizen to ahōdori*, 8; Uchida Seinosuke, "Horobiyuku ahodori," *Seiryō* 9(March 1956), 13; Ōno Yoshiteru, "Torishima no tori," *Tori* 14, no. 66 (1955), 24-33; "'Extinct' bird still exists on Torishima" *Japan Times*, 29 July 1954.

dispatched film units to Torishima to record wildlife documentaries about the bird.<sup>696</sup> Japan's national newspapers presented to their readership a heavily anthropomorphized portrait of the albatross that echoed the one crafted by American ornithologists half a century earlier (See [Chapter Three](#)). The *Mainichi shimbun* compared the albatross's courtship ritual to the mambo, the Cuban dance craze that swept the world in the postwar period.<sup>697</sup> (See [Figure 5.9](#)) The *Yomiuri shimbun* informed its readers that the albatross was not, in fact, a "foolish" bird, but simply innocent of the wickedness of humankind. The bird's name had been coined by "foolish men"<sup>698</sup> who, "killing hundreds of albatrosses each day, called their victims 'fool birds' in order to rationalize their own wickedness." The newspaper insisted that the very fact that the bird "does not know to distrust people" meant that it was "capable of great intimacy" with them.<sup>699</sup> The *Asahi Shimbun* was particularly effusive about the "cheerful", "friendly" albatrosses of Torishima, devoting numerous articles (including two front-page editorials) that emphasized both their intimate connection with humans and the urgent need to preserve Torishima as an "albatross paradise".<sup>700</sup>

The government also took public steps to protect the newly rediscovered species. In 1955 the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry despatched an official to visit Torishima to ascertain the bird's status.<sup>701</sup> The following year, as a direct result of this fact-finding tour, the

696. "Torishima no ahōdori (Kyōdō Eigasha)" *Asahi Shimbun*, 6 August 1956; "Today's TV Choice" *Japan Times*, 27 January 1962.

697. "Ahōdori: manbo odotte 'shūdan miai'" *Mainichi Shimbun*, 13 November 1955.

698. Japanese: *baka no yō na otoko*

699. "Ahōdori: hito natsukoi chikara mochi" *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 29 July 1966.

700. "Aka-chan mo maruba genkina tori suna bi ahōdori" *Asahi Shimbun*, 19 January 1961, 10; "Ahōdori no nakama (aichō shūkan ni yosete)" *Asahi Shimbun*, 7 May 1961.

701. "Ahōdori: manbo odotte 'shūdan miai'" ; "Tensei jingo" *Asahi Shimbun*, 31 March 1962.; "Hito natsukoi kaichō" *Asahi Shimbun*, 20 March 1965; "Tensei jingo" *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 March 1965.

Tokyo government provisionally designated the island's remaining albatrosses to be a natural monument.<sup>702</sup> The year after that, the Cultural Properties Preservation Committee confirmed this designation at the national level when it declared *Diomedea albatrus* and its nesting site on Torishima to be a “thing for which Japan is renowned and thus in need of protection”.<sup>703</sup> In 1962 the bird's status was upgraded to *special* natural monument.<sup>704</sup> Finally, in 1965 the scope of the designation was expanded so that albatrosses were to be considered protected wherever they were found in Japan. At the same time the entire island of Torishima was also declared a natural monument in its own right.<sup>705</sup>

What lay behind this flurry of enthusiasm for albatross conservation? Much of the credit must go to Yamashina, who as president of the JSPB spent most of 1955 touring Tokyo's media outlets and corridors of power drumming up interest in the bird.<sup>706</sup> But Japanese ornithologists had been lobbying for wild bird protection since long before the war, without succeeding in generating nearly so much of a reaction from the state or the mass media. (In fact, an article suggesting a Japanese transplantation of Bird Day appeared in the

702. “Utamaro no haka nado 12-ken To no bunkazai ni shitei” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 24 February 1956.

703. Fujisawa Tōru, *Ahōdori* (Tokyo: Tōkō Shoin, 1967), 32-33; Shōwa 33-nen bunkazai hogo iinkai kokuji dai 37-gō. While the Ministry of Education and Culture had been substantially dismantled during the Occupation, government oversight of cultural and natural monuments had been restored in the 1950 Cultural Properties Protection Law.

704. “Ahōdori kakuage: shiseki tennen kinenbutsu o shin shitei” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 30 March 1962.

705. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 897.

706. Aoki Eiji, *Yamashina Yoshimaro no shōgai*, 231 Yamashina's biographer describes how he, “despite his great dislike of politics”, devoted himself to wild bird protection, petitioning both houses of the Diet, the Education Ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests and the Forestry Agency, and appealing to the public through lectures, television and radio, newspapers and magazines.

very first issue of *Tori* as early as 1915.)<sup>707</sup> Part of the reason for their postwar success can be attributed to the institutional links that SCAP had forged between conservationist groups and branches of state, such as the Ministry of Education and Tokyo Metropolitan Government, that had previously shown little interest in wildlife protection. But the wave of Japanese interest in the albatross also represented an internalization of Austin's theory that nature conservation activities serve to demonstrate commitment both to democratic values, and to membership in the community of civilized nations more generally. In those early postwar years, many Japanese were acutely conscious of the Western postcolonial gaze. Even after the Occupation formally ended in 1952, the Japanese government remained preoccupied with how to "normalize" its status within the international community, most directly by reestablishing formal diplomatic relations with its former enemies, but also by showing that Japanese society had sloughed off those aberrant traits which had led to its aggression during the Pacific War.

Japanese ornithologists exploited this anxiety to argue for bird conservation, much as their Meiji predecessors had argued that the construction of a zoo would show that Japan belonged to the community of civilized nations.<sup>708</sup> Being able to demonstrate conservationist consciousness, Yamashina and his allies argued, would help to convince foreigners that Japan was fit to be trusted as a responsible member of the international community. Nakanishi Godō wrote that he wanted to transform Japan into a nation in which wild birds would no longer fear humans, so that foreign visitors to the country would "consider Japan highly,

707. *Tori* 1:1 (1915)

708. Ian Jared Miller, *The Nature of the Beasts : Empire and Exhibition At the Tokyo Imperial Zoo* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2011)

become fond of the nation without reservations, and put a whole trust in it at once.”<sup>709</sup>

Yamashina, who began traveling abroad widely after the war, constantly reiterated Austin’s unfavorable comparison of Japanese attitudes to Nature with those of the West. In a book titled “Countries where birds decrease and countries where they increase”, he castigated Japanese for terrorizing the birds of their homeland. During the Occupation, he wrote:

sparrows inside the metal wire surrounding the US base were not afraid of the soldiers. but outside the fence they returned to being normal sparrows, and fled from the enemy at the first glance." [He did not mention that during the Occupation, the "enemy" was generally quite hungry.]<sup>710</sup>

Yamashina went on to argue that the lack of bird biodiversity in Shinjuku park in Tokyo revealed the Japanese people's "backwardness"; whereas in the parks of London:

you will see wild ducks and squirrels unafraid of people. children feed them with peanuts. near buckingham palace, ducklings cross a road and a policeman stops traffic for them. people smile as they watch them. To have so many wild birds in the heart of city is the very definition of a civilized country.<sup>711</sup>

Yamashina also arranged for publication of an anthology of children’s stories, titled *The Albatross that Lived*. The book’s cover - which depicted Yamashina helping elementary school children build a nesting box in the gardens of the National Diet Building - made the connection between love of wildlife and the resurrection of Japanese democracy fairly explicit. (See [Figure 5.10](#)) Like the newspaper coverage, the book’s title story presented a highly anthropomorphized image of the albatross, describing its “mambo-like” dance and

709. Nakanishi Godō, “Yachō o aisuru kokoro,” *Nyū Eiji* 1, no. 5 (n.d.), 56 cited in Higuchi, “Birds for New Japan,” 20.

710. Yamashina Yoshimaro, *Tori no heru kuni fueru kuni*, 220.

711. *Ibid.*, 48-49, 219.

likening its nesting behavior to the cosy domestic rituals of a human couple.<sup>712</sup> The story even translated albatrosses' bobbing head movements into human dialogue. But it also emphasized the international significance of the albatross's disappearance and rediscovery, recounting in dramatized form how:

In 1949 Dr. Austin, a bird researcher who was famous in America [sic] and who devoted himself to bird protection, visited Torishima in search of the albatross. Risking life and limb, he climbed all over the steep cliffs of the island's shoreline looking for it. [sic] ... He searched every corner of the island where albatrosses were likely to be, but could not spot a single bird. So Dr. Austin shocked the people of the whole world by announcing: "The albatross has vanished from the face of the earth."

However, in 1954 a telegram travelled round the world that said: "There are albatrosses on Torishima." The albatross that was thought to have disappeared was alive.<sup>713</sup>

The story concluded with the rousing tale of how a Swedish lawyer had been so moved by the bird's plight that he sent a donation of ten U.S. dollars "for albatross conservation".<sup>714</sup>

Perhaps Yamashina's finest triumph came when he successfully lobbied for Tokyo to host the 1960 conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation. The conference took place the very same month that the National Diet met to ratify the US-Japan Security Treaty, at a moment when the nation seemed to be on the cusp of reintegrating into the international community. As a reward, the conference agreed to add *Diomedea albatrus* to the "Lake Success List": a register of animals in need of international protection "if they are to be saved from extinction".<sup>715</sup> It was likely this nomination by the ICBP that prompted the

712. Aoki Eiji, *Ikite ita ahōdori* (Tokyo: Aoba Shobō, 1957), 37. "After the male returns safely from a long trip, the female greets him: 'Gosh, it's been a while hasn't it?' 'You look well dear,' he replies. "Thank you, I've been fine."

713. *Ibid.*, 34-35.

714. *Ibid.*, 38.

715. Robert Boardman, *The International Politics of Bird Conservation: Biodiversity*,

Japanese government to upgrade the status of the albatross to a *special* natural monument of the nation. During Bird Week 1961, the *Yomiuri shimbun* made the connection between wildlife conservation and diplomatic reintegration explicit, publishing a cartoon that portrayed albatrosses hectored the Japanese people with incessant cries for normalization. ([Figure 5.11](#))

### **Developing Remote Islands in Post-Imperial Japan**

There was a further reason why the state was keen to promote wildlife conservation on Torishima. If Japan's postwar embrace of wildlife conservation stemmed from anxiety about the nation's compromised sovereignty, then this anxiety was particularly pronounced in relation to the outlying islands in the archipelago - most of which remained under foreign occupation long after 1945. Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands were occupied by the Soviet Union, and at the time of writing remain firmly under Russian control. And the Bonin and Ryūkyū Islands were occupied by the United States, and whilst Washington in principle recognized what it termed Japan's "residual sovereignty" over the islands, exact negotiations as to the timing of the return to Japanese administration continued until 1971. In fact of all Japan's remote island chains, only the Izu islands - including Torishima - were under Japanese control in the early postwar period. And even this had been a close run thing: in January 1946 SCAP had declared the islands separate from the Japanese mainland. The decision was reversed after two months, but not before the ensuing confusion inspired one

*Regionalism and Global Governance* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), 48; Richard Fitter and Maisie Fitter, *The Road to Extinction: Problems of Categorizing the Status of Taxa Threatened With Extinction : Proceedings of a Symposium Held By the Species Survival Commission, Madrid, 7 and 9 November 1984* (IUCN, 1987), 2.

village headman to suggest that his island of Ōshima, having “lost its ancestral land”, draft its own constitution as an independent nation.<sup>716</sup>

The Izu Islands were also in a state of economic crisis after the war. Part of this was a legacy of wartime mobilization. Toward the end of the Pacific War the islands had been heavily fortified in anticipation of invasion by American forces. The civilian population had been mostly evacuated, and Japanese troops stationed on the islands had ransacked them for fuel and food. Hillsides were denuded of trees, and herds of cattle cultivated for generations were slaughtered. Hachijōjima, the island from which Tamaoki had launched his colonization of Torishima, had once possessed a silk-weaving cottage industry, but during the war the looms were used as firewood.<sup>717</sup> Large areas of agricultural land were also transformed into airstrips or defensive fortifications.<sup>718</sup>

Beyond the wartime damage and dislocation, the communities of the Izu Isles were also afflicted by more profound structural problems. Until 1945 they had been sustained in large part by remittances from emigrants to places such as the Bonin Islands, Saipan and the Marshall Islands Mandate.<sup>719</sup> But with Japan’s defeat, these migrant populations were abruptly repatriated to their home islands. Hachijōjima’s population, for instance, increased to more than a third above its prewar level between 1945 and 1947.<sup>720</sup> (See [Figure 5.12](#)) Kikuchi Yoshirō, the Diet member representing the Izu Islands (and a Hachijōjima native), claimed that the postwar influx of repatriates had caused their total population to nearly

716. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 759.

717. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 347.

718. Kikuchi Yoshirō in the National Diet, 2 February 1951.

719. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 348-349, 1072.

720. Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Iinkai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 1067-1068.

double.<sup>721</sup> This sudden influx of returnees put acute pressure on resources, with later arrivals unable to rent agricultural land or even to salvage materials to build shelter for themselves. Even after initial shortages had been dealt with, the government was still faced with the problem of how to sustain these outlying islands as viable economic units, now that their residents had been shorn of opportunities for outmigration to the Japanese Empire.

The Izu Islanders' elected representatives were canny enough to couch their plight not merely as a local one, but as related to a broader problem of national survival in the postwar world. The islands' desperate poverty, they argued, was simply a function of their lack of development; in fact they were rich with untapped resources. Vigorous industrial policy could yield up these resources for the benefit of the nation as a whole, helping to compensate for the loss of Japan's imperial territories. In 1948 the National Land Planning Committee suggested that the islands be developed as a source of protein and fuel for the Tokyo metropolitan area.<sup>722</sup> In 1953 one Diet member, arguing for an infrastructure investment package targeted at Japan's outlying islands, reminded his colleagues that:

Our ancestral land of Japan has lost forty-five percent of its national territory as a result of losing the war... In order to achieve political independence and economic self-sufficiency for our nation on this limited amount of territory with its enormous population of over 80 million, then along with promoting trade it is also, needless to say, most urgent to plan for the development of every last inch of national territory. The remote islands separated by sea from the Japanese mainland harbor many marine and terrestrial resources, but due to restrictions imposed by various natural and social conditions, they are mostly as yet undeveloped.<sup>723</sup>

721. Kikuchi Yoshihirō in the National Diet, 2 February 1951.

722. Speech by Nagai Katsujirō to 2nd National Diet, National Land Planning Committee (Kokudo Keikaku Inikai) No.17, 3 July 1948.

723. Speech by Tsunashima Seikō to 16th National Diet, Economic Stabilization Committee (Keizai Antei Inikai) No.4, 7 July 1953.

In July 1953 the National Diet passed the Isolated Islands Development Law (IIDL),<sup>724</sup> a ten-year package of ¥2.7 million in central government funding earmarked for investment in Izu Islands infrastructure. The plan devoted the bulk of funds to improving fishery facilities, with ¥1,100,000 earmarked for fishing port facilities and a further ¥414,000 to be spent on shipping lane beacons and general port improvement. But it also subsidized harbor and road construction, electrification, afforestation and shoreline protection, erosion control, education and sewerage.<sup>725</sup>

As well as developing the Izu Islands as bases for the exploitation of marine resources, there was also talk of promoting the islands as tourist destinations. In 1949 a Diet representative for Shizuoka had suggested that the Izu Islands, along with a portion of the Izu Peninsula, be designated as a marine national park in the hope of attracting vacationing foreigners who might wish to sail their yachts from Tokyo or Yokohama.<sup>726</sup> The passage of the IIDL, which promised to comprehensively renovate the islands' transportation facilities, spurred on these hopes. In 1957 Yamashina Yoshimaro's adopted son helped the Tokyo metropolitan government draw up a development proposal which promised to balance the need to raise islanders' living standards with the need to protect nature. The proposed solution lay in international tourism. A group of foreign geographers, had visited the islands:

724. Japanese: *Ritō shinkō hō* 離島振興法.

725. TMA 18.84 to 30, "Shōwa 30 nendo ritō shinkō keikaku jigyō."

726. Hatakeyama Tsurukichi, speech to 5th National Diet plenary session No. 17, 14 April 1949.

and expressed the hope to one day bring their families on holiday [there]... The Izu islands clearly are a beautiful volcanic island chain that can be made to represent Japan.<sup>727</sup>

A number of things are interesting about this development strategy. Firstly, the act of representation was, like the postwar push for bird conservation, intended at least partly for the benefit of foreigners.<sup>728</sup> Secondly, the discursive *production* of Nature - the marketing of the Izu Isles to tourists as a “beautiful volcanic island chain” representative of the nation of Japan - in itself became a form of economic activity in the postwar period. The very failure of the Izu Islands to develop from their “natural” state now came to be seen as grist for an entirely new, self-consciously anti-developmental project.

### **Torishima from Colony to Wilderness, 1902-1965**

If the Izu Isles were to be transformed from stepping stones of colonial expansion into a

727. Kiuchi Jinzō, “Izu Shotō ni okeru hito to sono kankyō” in Tōkyō-to, *Izu Shichitō gakujutsu chōsa hōkoku* (March 1957), 112.

728. These efforts to reinvigorate the economy of the Izu Islands were at best a qualified success. Advances in onboard processing equipment meant that in the postwar period, most fishing vessels could travel to Pacific fishing grounds from the main Japanese islands without needing to make an intermediary stop at island ports. Instead of launching the islands into a trajectory of self-sustaining economic growth, the IIDL was instead renewed for another ten years in 1963. It was last renewed in 2013. Tourism promotion efforts also yielded modest returns. The Izu Islands were designated a quasi-national park in 1955, and were incorporated into the Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park in 1964. The hoped-for flotillas of foreign pleasure cruisers failed to appear, but after the IIDL paid for construction of an airport on Hachijōjima, hotels on the island began targeting domestic tourists with the slogan ‘The Hawaii of the Orient’. But from the 1970s the island found itself facing still competition for the allegiances of Japanese holiday-makers - first from Okinawa, and then from the genuine article. Since the heyday of the high-growth era, the number of tourist visitors to Hachijōjima has entered a steady decline. The resident population of the Izu Islands has also shrunk and aged markedly during the postwar period. The IIDL’s signal achievement has been to provide a continuous economic stimulus, in the form of ongoing infrastructure investment, that has kept the population from declining even faster.

symbol of the nation's natural heritage, then no island made for a better candidate than Torishima. Torishima's human settlement always been tiny, peaking at the 125 residents of Tamaoki-village who had been killed on the island when it erupted in 1902. Tamaoki had made efforts to resettle the island (including paying condolence money to the relatives of the deceased), but on the eve of World War the global plumage market collapsed, and a shift in fashion tastes away from feathers and toward what would become the 1920s "flapper" look meant that exporting feathers overseas was suddenly no longer nearly so profitable.<sup>729</sup> (See [Figure 1.5](#)) Between 1909 and 1911 the value of plumage exported from Japan dropped by forty per cent. After 1915, the Japanese Ministry of Finance stopped bothering to categorize plumage as a distinct export category.<sup>730</sup> In 1922, Tamaoki's bird hunting colony on Torishima was abandoned. It is unclear to what extent the decision was a result of falling global plumage prices or declining albatross numbers.

Four years later in 1926, the Hachijōjima local government, together with the Torishima Industries Co., sponsored an expedition led by one Okuyama Shūsaku to resettle the island, this time as a cattle ranching colony.<sup>731</sup> (See [Figure 5.13](#)) It was these ranchers, who in 1939 numbered only 23 adults, 5 children, and 45 heads of cattle, who posed the main threat to the remaining albatrosses on the island at the time when Yamashina visited.<sup>732</sup> The ranching operation does not appear to have prospered: according to report prepared by the

729. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, 51; "Nichi-butsumōeki to Yokohama" *Yokohama Bōeki Shimpō*, 11-15 July 1914. cited in Umō Kenkyūkai, *Umō to negu*, 146.

730. Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, *Nihon bōeki yōran*.

731. Okuyama Shūsaku, "Zasshu zaisan keizoku kashisage mōshikomisho" (24 December 1937) [Original housed in Hachijō shichō, document copy provided to author by Hasegawa Hiroshi.]

732. "Kimi yo shiru - minami no umi no paradaisu 'Ahōdori no Torishima'."

Tokyo metropolitan government, revenue peaked at ¥6,000 in 1934 before declining to ¥2,000 by 1937 - at which point a particularly severe storm battered the island, pushing the Torishima Industries Co. to the brink of insolvency.<sup>733</sup> But even this toehold of a settlement had to be aborted when, in 1939, the island started to erupt again.<sup>734</sup> This time the islanders were all evacuated safely (along with their cows) but the eruption completely transformed the topography of the island, forming a new caldera on top of what had been the main harbor and settlement. (See [Figure 5.14](#))

This more or less put paid to any more plans for resettling Torishima, even had there been any people willing to commit years of their life to building a community on an island that had erupted twice in thirty-seven years, and might very well erupt again at any moment. From this point on, there was only ever even a semi-permanent human presence on Torishima. In June 1944, towards the close of the Pacific War, the Imperial Navy posted a detachment of troops on the island to take meteorological readings. They were evacuated in October 1945 soon after surrender. Two years later, a weather station was constructed on the island, this time under the civilian auspices of the Central Meteorological Agency.<sup>735</sup> It was staff from this weather station who first rediscovered albatrosses on Torishima, and who in fact posed the only direct human threat toward the birds.

Initially, there was some suspicion that the meteorological personnel may have been implicated in tampering with the albatross colony.<sup>736</sup> Austin had described how:

733. Satō Kazuichi, “Torishima keiei ni kan suru fukumeisho” (28 November 1937) [Original housed in the Hachijō Shichō government office, document copy provided to author by Hasegawa Hiroshi.]

734. “Torishima kyū funkakō bakuhatsu! Hatsuka zen dekasegibito munen no hikiage.”

735. Iinkai, *Torishima*, 60-61.

736. Tickell, *Albatrosses*, 246.

The weather station personnel, noting the birds' tendency to fly to a bright light at night, tell how delicious meals of roast bird can be obtained simply by building a big bon-fire after dark and letting the petrels fly into it of their own accord.<sup>737</sup>

The JSPB appealed directly to the weather station staff to refrain from such behavior, and in the final event it was these personnel who ended up performing almost all the actual physical labor involved in protecting the albatrosses. As on Laysan Island (see [Chapter Three](#)), this mostly involved attempting to eradicate animals such as cats, rats and dogs that had been introduced to the island, and were deemed a threat to nesting chicks. The observatory staff went unremunerated for their services, but did receive a commendation from the Agency for Cultural Affairs.<sup>738</sup> And at one point a hunter was despatched from the Forestry Agency to exterminate a hawk that had been noticed circling over the albatross colony, but he returned to Tokyo without managing to spot the offending animal.<sup>739</sup> This was more or less the sum total of direct human attempts to conserve Torishima's remaining albatrosses.

After November 1965 however, even these modest efforts had to be scaled back drastically, when smoke was noticed emerging from the islands caldera. The observatory staff were all evacuated as a precautionary measure, spelling the end of human habitation on Torishima. In the years since, albatross conservation efforts on Torishima have been limited to occasional visits organized by the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology<sup>740</sup> and intrepid lone

737. Austin Jr, "The Status of Steller's Albatross," 289.

738. "Observatory to Be Thanked by Group" *Japan Times*, 8 July 1962.

739. Yoshikawa Motomu, "Ahōdori no hogo" in Jōtani Yukio and Shirai Kunihiko, *Torishima no shizen to ahōdori*, 13.

740. The Yamashina Institute for Ornithology continues to maintain close ties to the Japanese imperial family. At the time of writing the institute's honorary president is Prince Akishino, the second son of Emperor Akihito (and the holder of a PhD in ornithology).

ecologists such as Professor Hasegawa Hiroshi of Tohō University.<sup>741</sup> As of 2013, efforts to eradicate invasive fauna from Torishima had still not succeeded.<sup>742</sup>

The twentieth century history of Torishima, then, suggests that it has become an uninhabited wilderness not so much by government fiat as because the island itself has become effectively uninhabitable. This is due partly to the island's own volatile tectonics, which have deterred any further attempts at permanent colonization, but also because shifts in the global economy mean that few people are motivated to scale its cliffs any longer. The albatrosses that once enticed Tamaoki's bands of bird hunters are now too few to be harvestable on any kind of commercial scale; just as significantly, the international market for the birds' plumage has all but disappeared. Notwithstanding the Tokyo metropolitan government's stated concern about an imminent onslaught of tourists and mining companies, in the postwar period the island's natural resource value has been perceived as negligible.<sup>743</sup> The government's decision to designate the island as a natural monument of the nation therefore had an extraordinarily low opportunity cost.

More than this, it also served to mask the failure to exploit Torishima beneath the mantle of state-directed wildlife conservation. Cronon writes that "wilderness is the place where, symbolically at least, we try to withhold our power to dominate."<sup>744</sup> Torishima had once been claimed for Japan through colonization, both discursively through the rhetoric of

741. Since 2008 Professor Hasegawa, who has been an invaluable resource for the present study, has led an effort to reintroduce a population of Steller's Albatross onto Mukojima in the Bonin Islands.

742. Conversation with Yamashina Institute for Ornithology staff, May 2013.

743. In 1951 a ship, the *Yachiyo-maru*, did spend seven months mining sulfur on the island, but the operation was found to be unprofitable and was aborted after several months. Iinkai, *Torishima*, 61.

744. Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness," Kindle location 1424.

development, and in practice through the act of settling it. But in the postwar period, the absence of human settlement on the island was now mobilized as testament to its pristine wilderness state, which in turn served to demonstrate enlightened stewardship of the territory.

## EPILOGUE

### How to Butcher an Albatross

Disputes over sovereignty and nature conservation continue to play out in the present day. Consider the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, a group of islets lying in the ocean between Taiwan and Okinawa, that are currently the object of a bitter diplomatic dispute between the governments of Japan and China. In September 2011, a group of Japanese biologists announced their discovery that the Senkaku albatross population constituted a genetically distinct subspecies. The biologists were explicit about the policy implications of this discovery, suggesting that this new subspecies constituted a distinct “conservation unit” in need of protection from invasive predators.<sup>745</sup> The mayor of Ishigaki Island, the closest Japanese settlement to the Senkaku group, soon seized on this announcement. In an interview with the conservative-leaning *Sankei Shimbun* newspaper, he announced that he had petitioned the central government in Tokyo to revise its application for UNESCO natural heritage status for Okinawa, so as to include the Senkaku Islands as well.<sup>746</sup> This provoked a fiery response from the mainland Chinese media. In September 2013, on the first anniversary

745. Masaki Eda, *et al.*, “Inferring the Ancient Population Structure of the Vulnerable Albatross *Phoebastria Albatrus*, Combining Ancient DNA, Stable Isotope, and Morphometric Analyses of Archaeological Samples,” *Conservation Genetics* 13, no. 1 (2012); Eda Masaki and Higuchi Hiroyoshi, “Kikyū shu ahōdori *Phoebastria albatrus* wa 2-shu kara naru? (tokushū tori no shubunka to bunrui),” *Nihon chōgakkai shi* 61, no. 2 (October 2012) The discovery also had implications for an ongoing project, led by Yamashina Institute researcher Deguchi Tomohiro, to transplant several Torishima albatrosses to start a new nesting colony on the Bonin Islands.

746. “‘Senkaku’ mo sekai isan tōroku o: Ishigaki-shi, kuni ni genchi chōsa yōkyū e.”

of the Japanese government's nationalization of the islands, the PRC's state-run Central China Television broadcast a news bulletin denouncing the albatross conservation campaign as a Japanese plot to "use the pretext of environmental protection to snatch the islands from us."<sup>747</sup>

It might be tempting to dismiss this accusation as nothing more than partisan propaganda. But it contains a kernel of truth. As this dissertation has set out to demonstrate, there *is* a relationship between nature conservation and states' assertions of territorial sovereignty. Japan's involvement with the Senkaku Islands began in much the same manner as with Marcus Island and Torishima. Japanese subjects began making trips to the islands round about 1885, in order to extract turban snails that could be used to manufacture mother-of-pearl. The turban snail population was depleted around 1891, after which Japanese fishermen switched to albatross hunting instead.<sup>748</sup> During the Sino-Japanese War the Japanese government formally annexed the islands to Okinawa. It is this timing of this annexation that makes the Senkaku-Diaoyu dispute so contentious: Chinese diplomats argue that it constituted an act of Japanese aggression, and that the islands should be returned to Chinese administration just as the island of Taiwan was in 1945.<sup>749</sup> However the Japanese

747. Chinese: *jie huanbao zhi ming xing duo dao zhi shi* 借环保之名行夺岛之实 See CCTV-4 news bulletin broadcast 15 September 2013, viewed online at "[Ri yanjiu zu na Diaoyu-dao xintianweng houdai zuo wenzhang.](#)" Last accessed 7 August 2015.

748. Japanese had been active on the islands since 1885, drawn initially by their plentiful population of turban snails, whose shells were used as mother-of-pearl. Hiraoka Akitoshi, "Meiji-ki ni okeru Senkaku Shotō e no Nihonjin no shinshutsu to Koga Tatsushirō," *Jinbun Chiri* 57:5(2005), 512; "Taidao jingxin" *Shen Bao*, 6 September 1885.

749. It is likely that military success in the Sino-Japanese War at the very least emboldened the Japanese government to claim the islands. A decade earlier, in 1885, the Governor of Okinawa had called for Japan to annex the Senkaku Islands, but was rebuffed by Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru, who did not want to risk offending the Qing government. On the other hand, Inoue's caution does not constitute incontrovertible proof that Japan acknowledged

who colonized the Senkaku Islands, as on Torishima and Marcus islands, eventually failed to establish permanent settlements. In 1896 four islands in the group were leased to a native of Fukuoka by the name of Koga Tatsushirō, who established a tuna fishery on one of the islands. The factory went out of business in 1940 - and this was the last time there has been any kind of even semi-permanent human settlement on the islands.<sup>750</sup>

At the end of World War II the islands, along with the rest of Okinawa Prefecture, were placed under U.S. military government for an indefinite period of time. But like the Occupation Government that administered Japan from 1945 until 1952, the Ryukyu Government was a hybrid beast. Although ultimate executive authority rested with the U.S. military, the bulk of day-to-day administration was carried out by Japanese officials. This administration paid careful attention to cultural policy, always with one eye toward eventual reunification with the mainland. In 1957 a Cultural Treasure Preservation Law<sup>751</sup> was passed, more or less exactly modeled on its Japanese equivalent. A committee of Okinawa-based scholars began scouring the archipelago for those few cultural relics which had survived the American invasion, and also for entities that could be designated natural treasures.<sup>752</sup>

In the 1960s, encouraged by the explosion of media coverage about Torishima and its albatrosses (see Chapter Five), this committee started dispatching survey expeditions to the Senkaku Isles, searching for evidence of albatrosses remaining there as well. They failed to spot any. But what they did find was several Taiwanese fishing vessels moored alongside the

Qing sovereignty over the island group. At most it shows that the Japanese Foreign Ministry was uncertain as to what stance the Qing government would take on the issue.

750. Hiraoka Akitoshi, "Meiji-ki ni okeru Senkaku Shotō e no Nihonjin no shinshutsu to Koga Tatsushirō," 58.

751. Japanese: Bunkazai Hogo Hō 文化財保護法.

752. Ryūkyū Seifu Bunkazai Hogo Iinkai, *Bunkazai yōran* (Naha: 1965), 2-3.

islands, with fisherman onshore killing birds and collecting eggs.<sup>753</sup> (See [Figure 6.1](#)) Back in Japan, the news that Chinese were trespassing on the nation's sovereign territory made headlines, inspiring newspaper editorials that called for action to be taken to protect the Senkaku seabirds from "inexcusable over-hunting".<sup>754</sup> In many ways, the general tone of the coverage echoed that of the Hawaiian press sixty years previously. In the event some anti-poaching signs were erected on the island, but as neither the Japanese nor the Ryukyu Government had any kind of on-the-ground presence in the Senkaku Islands, there was not a great deal more to be done.

Finally, in May 1971 a researcher from the University of the Ryukyus managed a confirmed sighting of albatrosses in the Senkaku group. By this point Okinawa's reversion to Japan was imminent but, with the discovery of possible offshore oil and gas deposits, the sovereignty dispute with China was also beginning to escalate.<sup>755</sup> The Japanese government initially planned to open a weather-station on one of the islands, much as it had done on Torishima and Marcus Island, as a way of staking its claim. But it was dissuaded from this course of action by the U.S. State Department.<sup>756</sup> Instead the government was reduced to producing what were quite literally token assertions of sovereignty, such as a stamp that portrayed albatrosses as an integral part of the "Senkaku rettō ni ō yuden?", and by extension Japanese, polity. (See [Figure 6.2](#)) Thongchai Winichakul, following Benedict Anderson, describes the various discursive techniques through which the "geobody" of the nation is

753. Senkaku Shotō Bunken Shiryō Kenkyū Hensankai, *Senkaku kenkyū: Takara gakujutsu chōsadan shiryōshū: jō* (Naha: 2007), 25, 34.

754. "Shimajima ōu kaichō no mure" *Asahi Shimbun*, 21 May 1963.

755. "Senkaku rettō ni ō yuden?" *Ryūkyū Shimpō*, 12 July 1968; Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands - Between "Shelving" and "Dispute Escalation."

756. "U.S. killed plan for Senkaku Islands weather station" *Japan Times*, 5 September 2013.

imagined - and here, as with Torishima, we see the albatross being represented as a charismatic, rare and uniquely Japanese species in order to argue that the Senkaku Isles are an integral part of the Japanese nation state.<sup>757</sup>

In 1978, as part of the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, the Senkaku/Diaoyu sovereignty dispute was shelved. (Deng Xiaoping famously quipped that a resolution to the dispute was best left to later generations who might be wiser.) But in recent years the dispute has begun to bubble up again, as nationalist groups in both Japan and China have sought to publicize the issue as a way of elevating patriotic consciousness among their respective citizenries. One catalyst for recent tensions, for instance, has been the series of confrontations between Chinese fishing vessels and the Japanese coastguard since 2010. Another was Mayor Ishihara Shintarō's announcement in April 2012 of a plan for the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to purchase the islands from their (Japanese) owners. Hoping to prevent the Senkaku from falling into the hands of a known demagogue, the Japanese government decided to nationalize the islands. But rather than defusing diplomatic tension with China, this only served to escalate it.<sup>758</sup>

It is within this fraught international context that Japanese ornithologists announced their discovery about the Senkaku albatrosses, which was quickly exploited by the mayor of Ishigaki. The mayor (who has written a book denouncing Chinese claims to sovereignty over the Senkaku group) was clearly hoping that, should UNESCO recognize the islands as part of a Japanese natural heritage site, then this would bolster his nation's claim to administer

757. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*.

758 Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation Over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands - Between "Shelving" and "Dispute Escalation."

them.<sup>759</sup> In doing so, he was but the latest in a long line of historical actors to use wildlife conservation as a means to produce sovereignty over uninhabited territory. If failure to settle a territory serves to weaken sovereign control over it, then the magic of wilderness conservation has, since the start of the twentieth century, served to transmute this failure into evidence of enlightened stewardship.

If this is how Nature can be used to produce sovereignty, then how does an attention to sovereignty affect the way we think about Nature? William Cronon correctly pointed out that the concept of wilderness is problematic, for Nature is to be found equally on a mountaintop, the Pacific Ocean, the stockyards of Chicago, or the gears of a motorcycle. Nevertheless, Cronon remained unwilling to jettison the concept of Nature entirely. Indeed, he was at pains to emphasize that “the autonomy of nonhuman nature seems to me an indispensable corrective to human arrogance.”<sup>760</sup> His caution is echoed by other environmental historians. Like Cronon, Richard White critiques narrowly elitist environmentalist understandings of Nature, but he draws on Emerson to suggest instead that working people knew Nature in their own way through labor.<sup>761</sup> And Karl Jacoby adapts E.P. Thompson’s concept of moral economy to argue that poachers in national parks possessed their own “moral ecology” - “a strikingly different sense of what nature is and how it should be used.”<sup>762</sup>

This insistence on retaining the viability of some concept of Nature perhaps stems from the hope of capturing the term’s ideological power on behalf of non-elites such as

759. Nakayama Yoshitaka, *Chūgoku ga mimi o fusagu Senkaku Shotō no futsugōna shinjitsu: Ishigaki shichō ga tsutsuguru Nihon gaikō no aru beki sugata* (Tokyo: Wani Bukkusu PLUS Shinsho, 2012)

760. Cronon, “The Trouble With Wilderness.” Kindle location 1413.

761. Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River (Critical Issue Book)* (Hill and Wang, 1996-01-31). Ch.1.

762. Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*. Kindle location 247.

indigenes or the working classes. But it is hardly valid to critique other people's mobilization of natural knowledge, whilst at the same time insisting on our own privileged access to Nature's truth. It is for this reason that I have resisted the temptation to narrate events from the perspective of the albatrosses themselves. (To paraphrase Graham Burnett, this is a study not of albatrosses, but of the *uses* of albatrosses.<sup>763</sup>) The objection is partly a philosophical one. As Wittgenstein might put it, if albatrosses could speak we would not understand what they were saying. There is also more political objection, raised by subaltern studies theorists: on whose authority would I even claim to represent albatrosses?<sup>764</sup> As Ian Miller points out, "such ventriloquism would, in fact, be a disservice since it would invariably be an act of dominance."<sup>765</sup> Most troublingly of all though, to seek to recover the perspective of "the albatross" would risk perpetuating a tradition dating back to Coleridge, whereby a particular species is made to represent Nature in its totality. Invariably it is those supposedly wild or indigenous species that are pressed into service in this way. But who decides what is wild, what is indigenous, and in what situations does it matter?

In the North Pacific, the effort to recover the nonhuman perspective risks becoming particularly absurd. As John McNeill shows, islands such as Laysan and Torishima were "born barren of life, basaltic pimples on the sea's surface", and no lifeforms that dwell on them are truly indigenous.<sup>766</sup> If we are to recover the perspectives of albatrosses (which do nest in colonies after all), ought we not extend the same courtesy to those feral cats and

763. D. Graham Burnett, *The Sounding of the Whale: Science and Cetaceans in the Twentieth Century* (University Of Chicago Press, 2012-01-31), Introduction.

764. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Ranajit and Spivak Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

765. Miller, Ian Jared. *The Nature of the Beasts*, 14.

766. McNeill, "Of Rats and Men," 301.

rabbits that ecologists have marked for extermination as invasives? To attempt this would, of course, be to embark on a sprawling and surely impossible effort to reconstruct all of the multiple ecologies that have ever existed.

And what would be the point of such a quixotic project? As Latour points out, “it is impossible to make [multiple] natures play any political role whatsoever”.<sup>767</sup> Nature is meaningful only as a unity; at the same time, if everything is natural then nothing is. This might feel counter-intuitive, even sacrilegious, especially to environmental historians. But I suspect that once we have learned to think without Nature, we shall not miss it. It is an albatross around our necks.

767. Latour, *The Politics of Nature*, Kindle location 431.

# ARCHIVAL SOURCES

BMC	Bishop Museum Collection, Honolulu
HSA	Hawaiian State Archives, Honolulu
IHS	Izu Hachijō Shichō Archives
MOFA	Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Tokyo
NAJ	National Archives of Japan, Tokyo
NARA-II	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland
NHM-T	Natural History Museum Archives, Tring
SIA	Smithsonian Institute Archives, Washington DC
TMA	Tokyo Metropolitan Archives, Tokyo
UHM	University of Hawaii at Manoa

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## APPENDIX I: FIGURES

**Figure 1.1: "A Bird of Prey"**

Source: *Punch*, 14 May 1892, reproduced in Robin W. Doughty,  
*Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*  
(University of California Press, 1974)



**Figure 1.2: Torishima development plan**

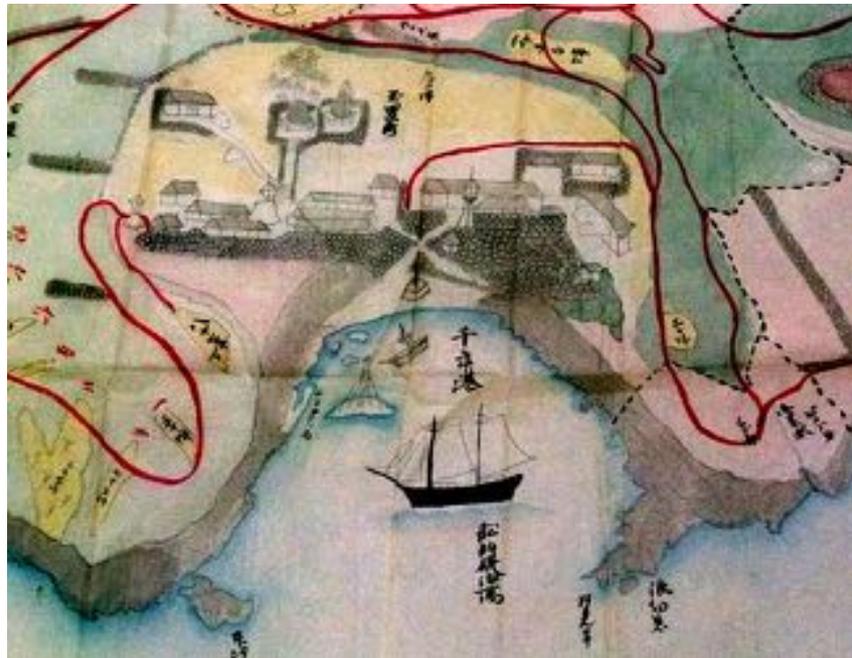
Source: TMA 625 D4 19: Torishima ikkatsu

Submitted by Tamaoki as part of his petition to the Tokyo metropolitan government.



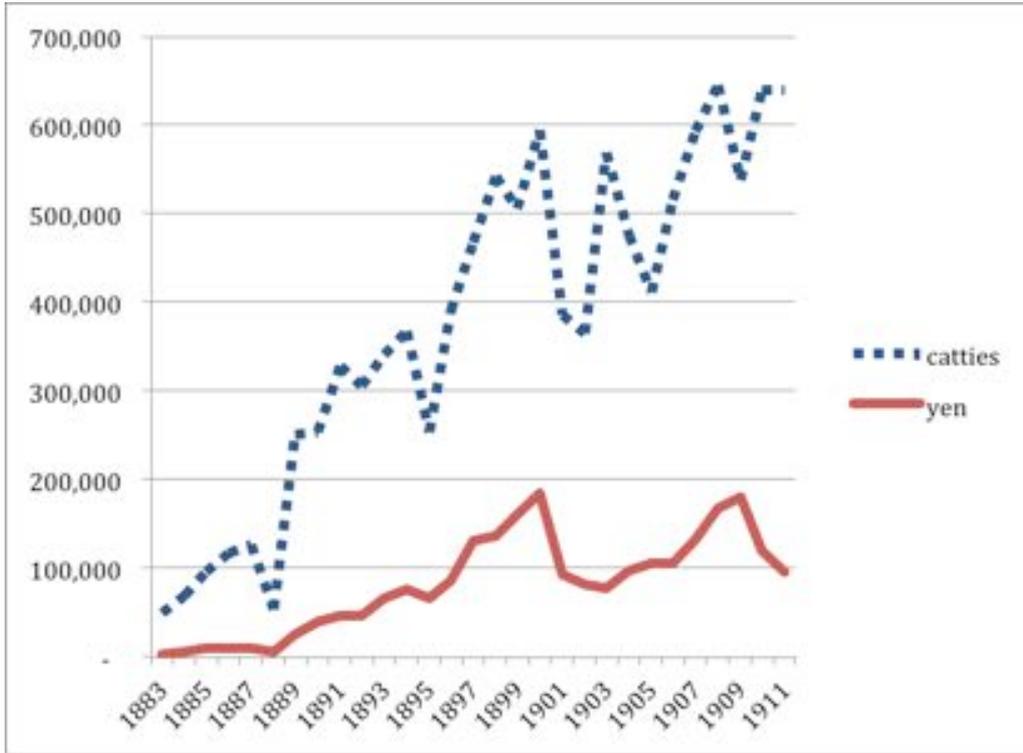
**Figure 1.3: Detail from Figure 1.2**

Source: TMA 625 D4 19: Torishima ikkatsu



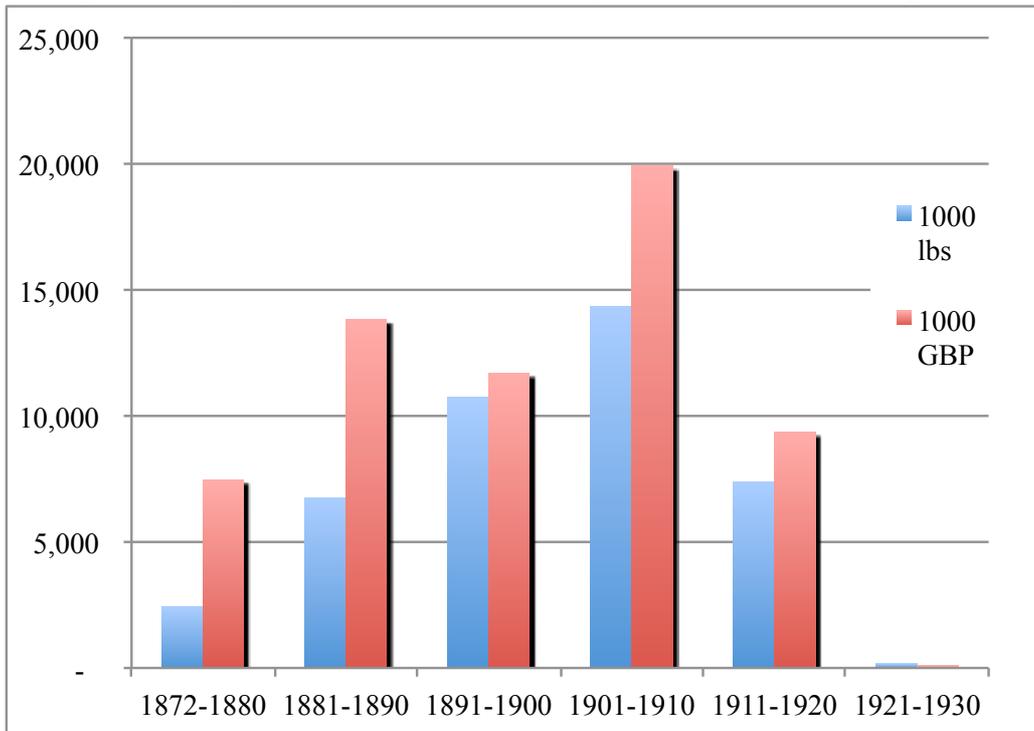
**Figure 1.4: Japan Plumage Exports, 1883-1911**

Source: Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, *Nihon bōeki yōran*, 30-31, 274. (1 catty = approx. 600g.)



**Figure 1.5: Britain Plumage Imports, 1872-1930**

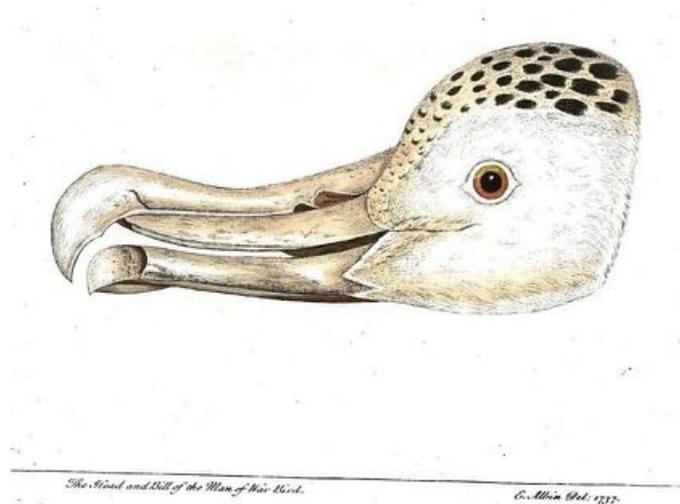
Source: Great Britain Board of Trade, *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom in Each of the Last Fifteen Years from 1879 to 1893: No. 41* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1894)



**Figure 1.6: Mizutani Shinroku, Sketch of Marcus Island**  
Source: TMA 625 D4 19: Torishima ikkatsu.



**Figure 2.1: Eleazar Albin, “The Head and Bill of the Man of War Bird”**  
Source: Albin, *A Natural History of Birds*. No.76.



**Figure 2.2: George Edwards, Life Drawing of an Albatross**  
Source: Edwards, *Natural History of Uncommon Birds*. Vol.II No.88.



**Figure 2.3: Sydney Parkinson, “*Diomedea exulans*, wandering albatross”**  
Source: [Natural History Museum Picture Library](#) (Last accessed 29 January 2015)  
Partially completed water-color of a specimen taken aboard the *Endeavour*.



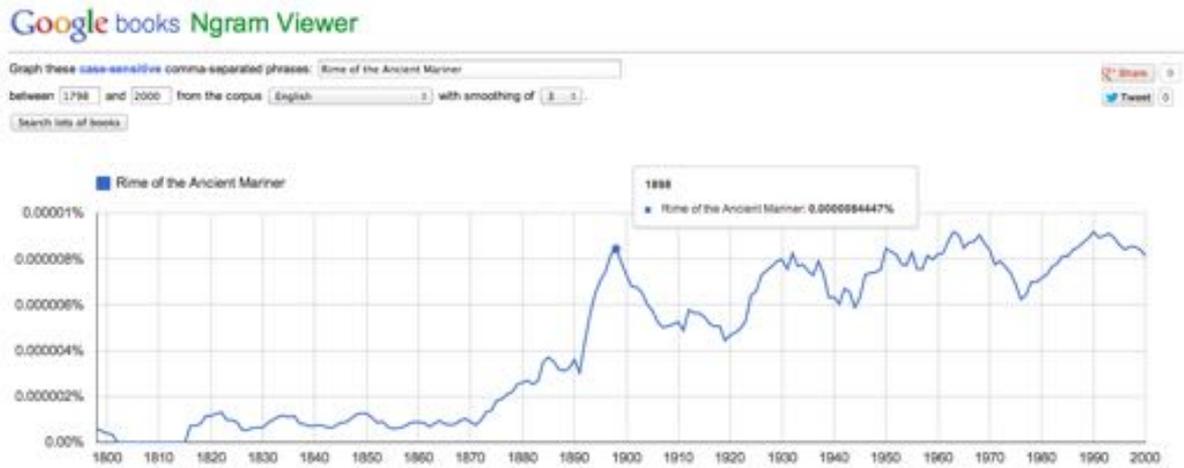
**Figure 2.4: The Pacific in the Enlightenment Imagination**  
Source: William Hodges, *HMS 'Resolution' and 'Adventure' with Fishing Craft in Matavai Bay* (1776).



**Figure 2.5: Google Books Ngram for “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, 1798-2000**

Source: <https://books.google.com/ngrams/>. Last accessed 29 January 2015.

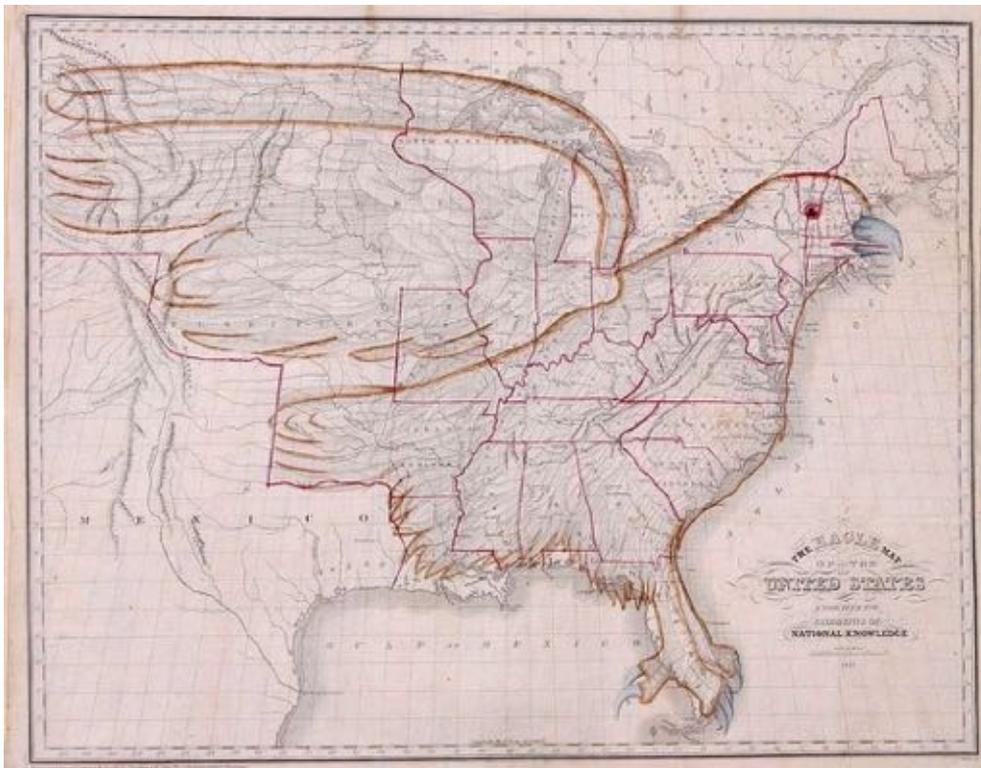
Whilst the underlying data is not public, this algorithm suggests the number of texts citing the phrase “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” within the Google Books database spiked in the years leading up to 1898, the centenary of the poem’s publication.



**Figure 2.6: “The Eagle Map of the United States”**

Source: Joseph Churchman, *Rudiments of National Knowledge, Presented to the Youth of the United States, and to Enquiring Foreigners* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & A. Hart, 1833)

This map was produced at the height of Audubon craze; the eagle’s spreading wings invoke the expanding western territorial extent of the nation.



**Figure 2.7: Roelandt Savery (1576-1639), “Dodo” (n.d.)**

Source: [Natural History Museum Picture Library](#) Last accessed 28 October 2014.



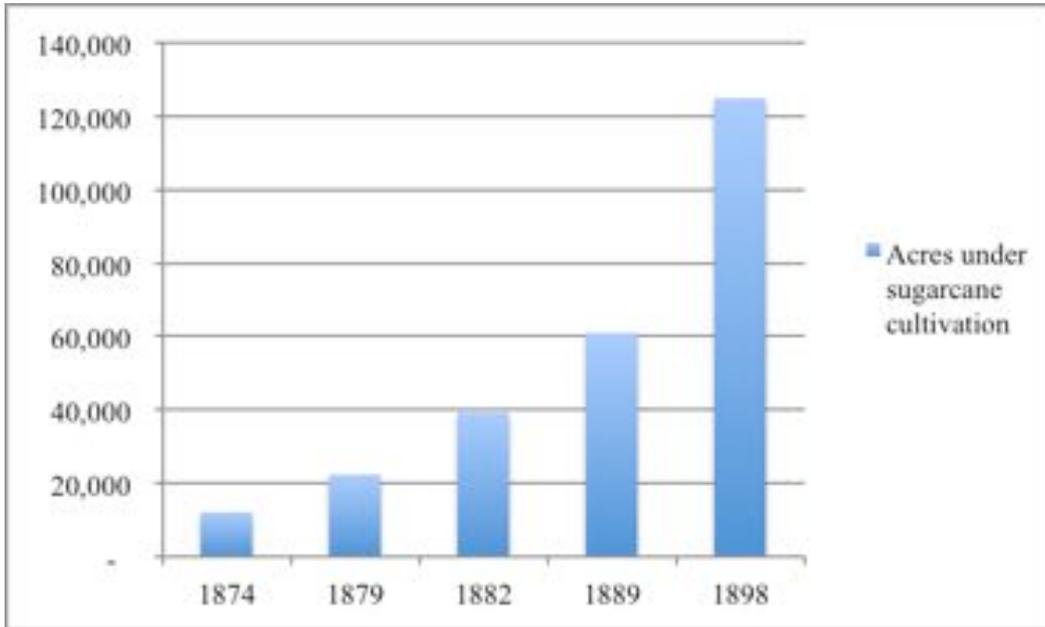
**Figure 2.8: John Tenniel, Dodo illustration**

Source: Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



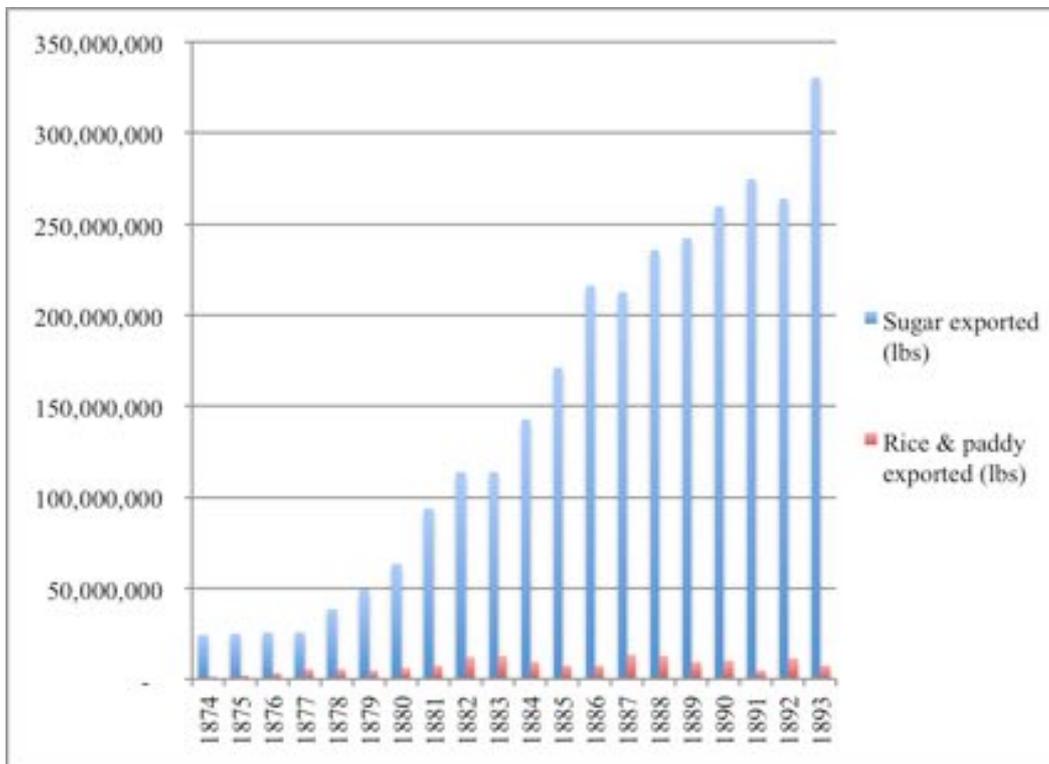
**Figure 2.9: Hawaiian acreage under sugar cultivation, 1874-1898**

Source: Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 6.



**Figure 2.10: Hawaiian sugar exports, 1874-1893**

Source: Customhouse Reports cited in *Ibid.*



**Figure 2.11: Japanese guano miners on Laysan, c.1903**  
 Source: UHM William Alanson Bryan collection: “Laysan photos”  
 Flocks of albatrosses are visible in the background.



**Figure 2.12: Laysan Island guano mine income and expenditure, 1890-1904**  
 Source: Hawaii State Archives Pacific Chemical Fertilizer Co. M-476.

Year	Guano Mined (lbs)	Income (USD)	Expenditures (USD)					TOTAL	Net Profits (USD)
			Salary	Labor	Supplies	Freight	Other		
1890/91	348,000	\$ 1,515							
1892	6,157,620	\$ 20,471							
1893	2,060,495	\$ 15,604	\$10,370	\$ 18,147	\$17,575	\$24,419	\$31,395	\$101,906	\$ (9,692)
1894	9,780,553	\$ 42,078							
1895	1,644,950	\$ 9,870							
1896	8,056,678	\$ 40,624	\$ 2,667	2,416	\$ 2,926	\$11,850	\$ 3,658	\$ 23,517	\$ 17,107
1897	8,232,630	\$ 32,906	\$ 2,685	2,881	\$ 3,166	\$11,511	\$ 2,326	\$ 22,570	\$ 10,336
1898	5,734,658	\$ 24,482	\$ 2,713	2,659	\$ 2,633	\$ 9,318	\$ 5,795	\$ 23,119	\$ 1,384
1899	7,495,760	\$ 33,165	\$ 2,739	3,923	\$ 4,320	\$14,648	\$ 2,579	\$ 28,218	\$ 4,943
1900	4,780,390	\$ 28,682	\$ 3,581	3,698	\$ 3,881	\$26,119	\$ 3,165	\$ 40,445	\$ (11,762)
1901	6,639,780	\$ 37,320	\$ 3,128	3,391	\$ 4,181	\$12,930	\$ 2,209	\$ 25,839	\$ 11,481
1902	10,449,120	\$ 52,139	\$ 2,788	6,990	\$ 6,428	\$21,528	\$ 4,731	\$ 42,516	\$ 9,624
1903	8,538,800	\$ 42,694	\$ 2,475	5,472	\$ 3,808	\$17,888	\$ 2,503	\$ 32,145	\$ 10,549
1904	5,945,040	\$ 26,307	\$ -	1,462	\$ -	\$19,060	\$ 1,406	\$ 21,927	\$ 6,131

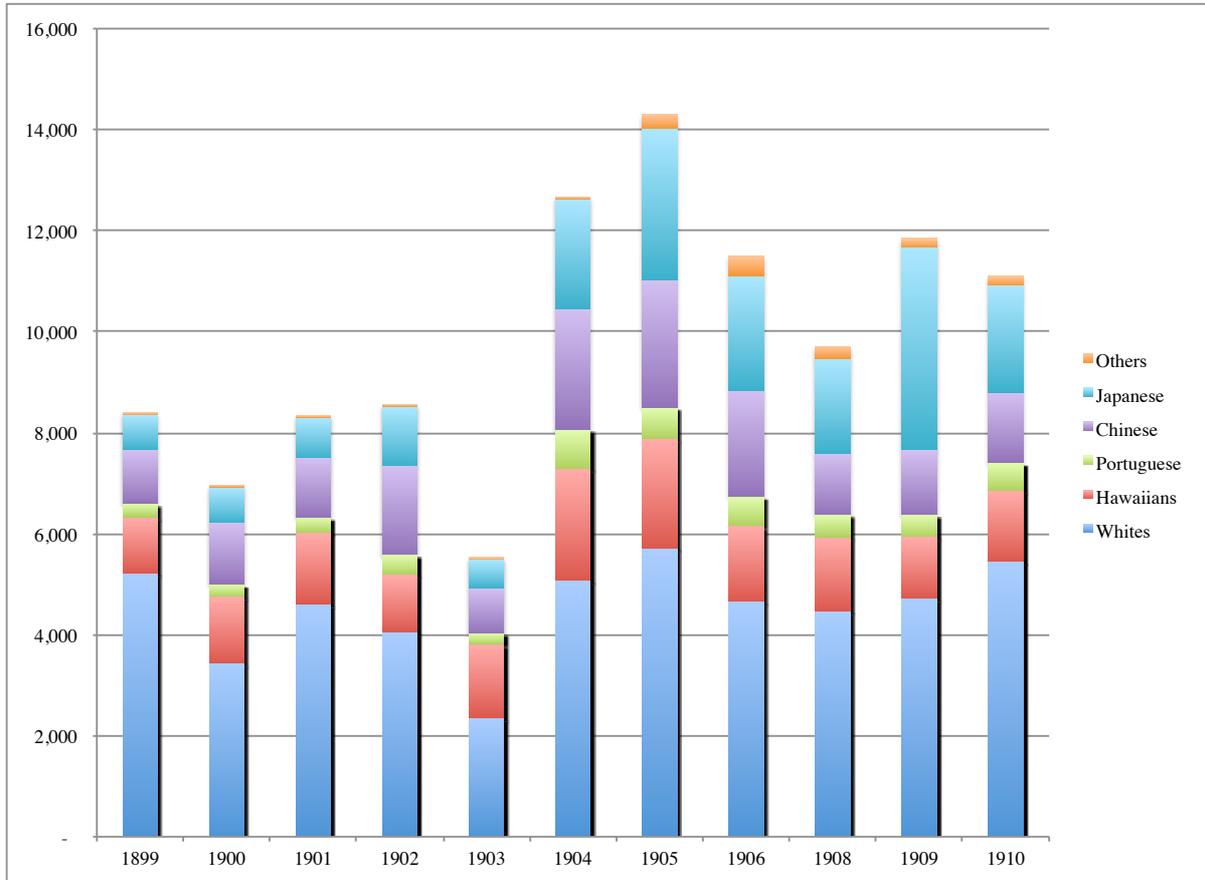
**Figure 2.13: "Guano Diggers among the Albatrosses. Laysan Island."**  
Source: Rothschild, *The Avifauna of Laysan and the Neighbouring Islands*.



**Figure 2.14: Albatrosses, guano miners and carts laden with eggs**  
Source: *Ibid.*



**Figure 2.15: Visitors to the Bishop Museum by Race, 1899-1910**  
 Source: Bishop Museum Director's Reports, 1900-1911.



**Figure 2.16: Laysan Island Cyclorama**

Source: Brian Switeck [@Laelaps], <https://twitter.com/laelaps/status/518463787893260288>

“A cyclorama of Laysan Island at @IowaMNH. To stand here is to see a lost world.”

Posted 4 October 2014. Last accessed 13 July 2015.



**Figure 3.1: William Alanson Bryan and his wife at their home in Honolulu, c.1903**  
Source: UHM William Alanson Bryan collection: "Laysan photos".



**Figure 3.2: Bryan's wife with household maid, c.1903**  
Source: UHM William Alanson Bryan collection: "Laysan photos".

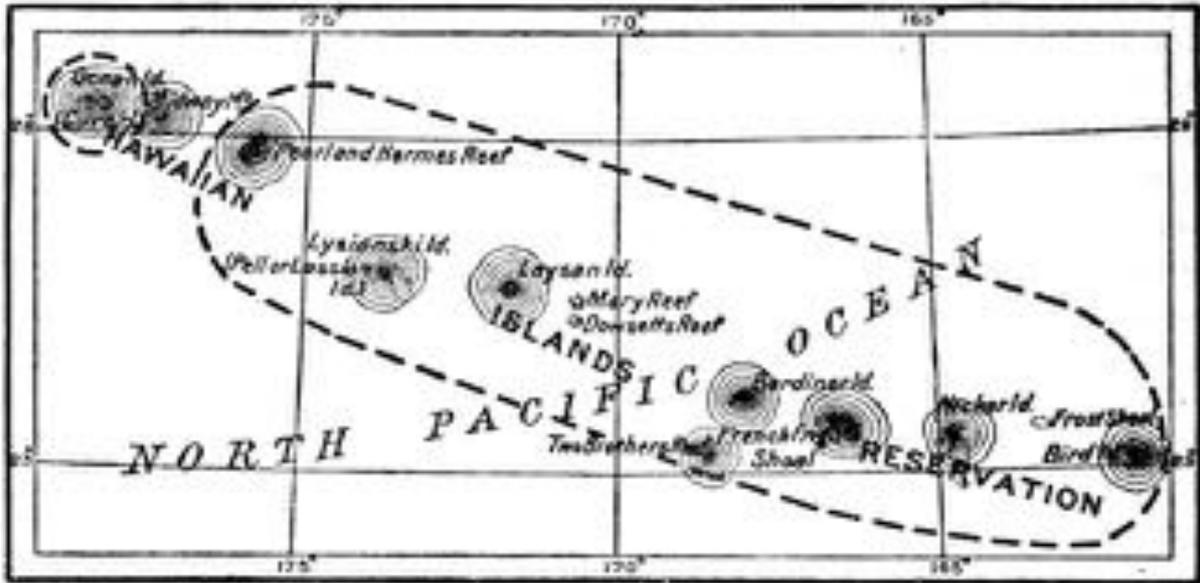


**Figure 3.3: Max Schlemmer's son carrying a brace of birds, c.1903**  
Source: UHM William Alanson Bryan collection: "Laysan photos".



**Figure 3.4: The Hawaiian Islands Reservation**

Source: President Theodore Roosevelt Executive Order 1019, 3 February 1909.

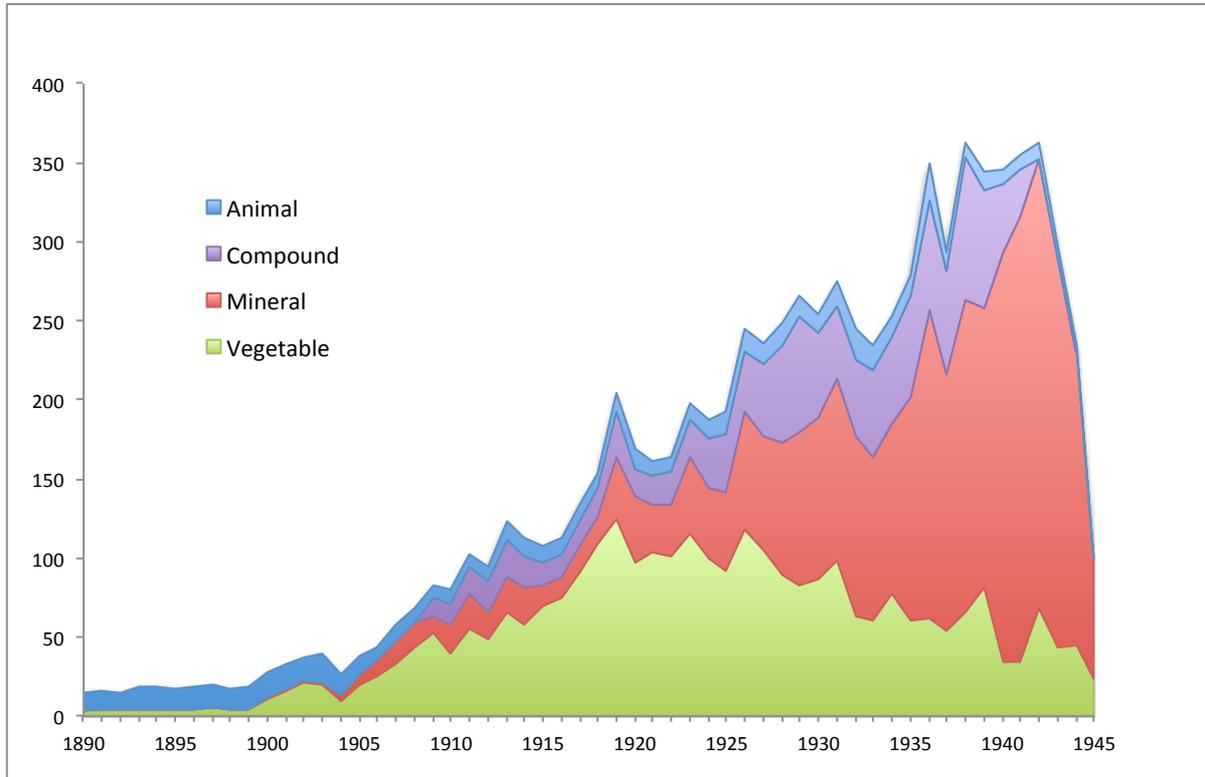


**Figure 3.5: “The Albatross: Texas Tommy in the Mid-Pacific”**

Source: *The San Francisco Sunday Call*, William Altdorfer, 30 June 1912.



**Figure 4.1: Nitrogen content of fertilizer inputs, Japan 1890-1945 (ktons N)**  
Source: Norinsuisanshō Chōki Keizai Tōkei: Nōringyō, vol. IX.



**Figure 4.2: Japan's Estimated Phosphate Deficit, c.1895**

Source: Tsunetō Noritaka, *Hinata kuni rinsan* (1896), 7-9.

<b>ANNUAL PHOSPHATE CONTENT WITHDRAWN FROM SOIL</b>			
Crop type	Amount harvested (catties)	Phosphate content	Phosphate withdrawn (catties)
Unpolished rice	1,674,635,840	0.54%	9,043,034
Wheat	138,853,844	0.79%	1,096,945
Barley	238,795,424	0.56%	1,337,254
Other wheat	243,547,436	0.75%	1,814,428
Chestnuts	129,102,988	0.85%	1,097,375
Soybeans	111,983,940	1.04%	1,164,633
Adzuki beans	12,847,280	0.85%	109,202
Corn	8,418,671	0.57%	47,986
Millet	34,687,830	0.57%	197,721
Sweet potato	568,371,606	0.09%	511,534
Potato	40,491,431	0.19%	76,934
Seeded crops	32,850,304	1.66%	545,315
Indigo	15,447,822	0.75%	115,859
Tea	7,608,368	0.80%	60,867
Mulberry & tobacco	7,643,203	0.53%	40,509
<b>TOTAL PHOSPHATE WITHDRAWN</b>			<b>16,986,432</b>

<b>ANNUAL PHOSPHATE MANUFACTURED (DOMESTICALLY)</b>			
Fertilizer type	Amount produced (catties)	Phosphate content	Phosphate produced (catties)
Dried fish	7,023,802	3.5%	245,833
Fishmeal	33,597,625	4%	1,343,905
Oil-seed cake	20,000,000	2%	400,000
Cow & horse bonemeal	2,172,192	20%	434,438
Rice bran	124,085,732	3.78%	4,690,441
Human urine & excrement (combined)	3,104,123,475	0.125%	3,880,154
<b>TOTAL (DOMESTIC) PHOSPHATE INPUTS</b>			<b>10,994,771</b>

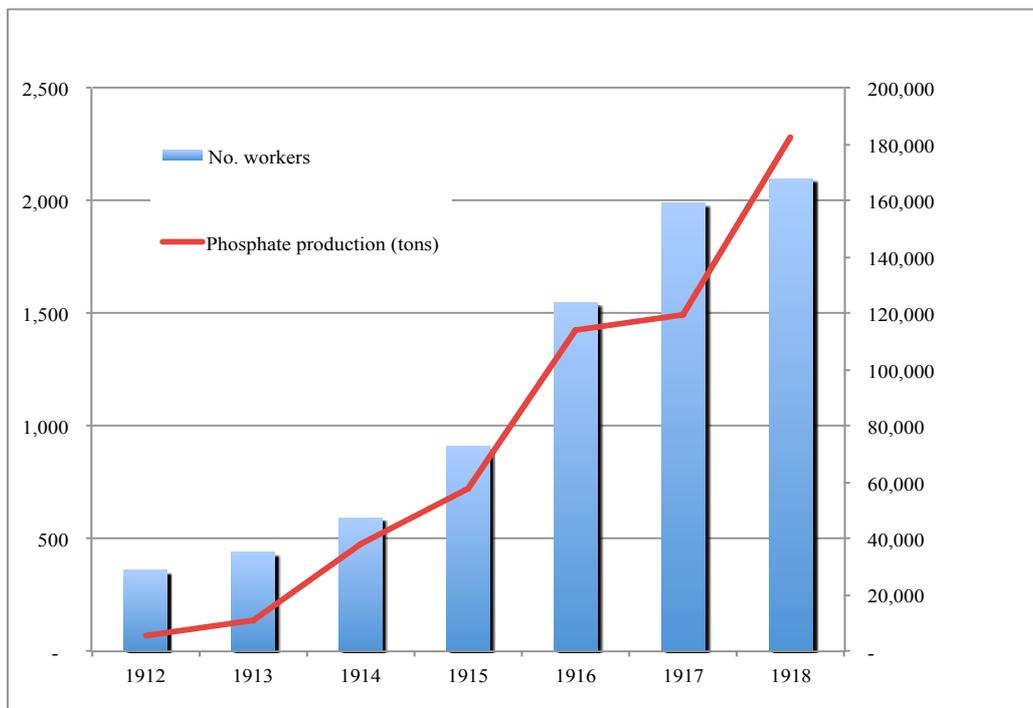
**Figure 4.3 Marcus Island Phosphate Production**

Source: Yawata, *Rinkō*.

Year	Quantity (tons)	Value (yen)
1907	381	6,484
1908	353	5,179
1909	367	4,229
1910	500	7,592
1911	383	5,753
1912	652	10,256
1913	611	10,459
1914	532	9,032
1915	443	6,778
1916	466	6,817
1917	435	6,966
1918	366	7,054
1919	200	3,774
1920	424	8,188

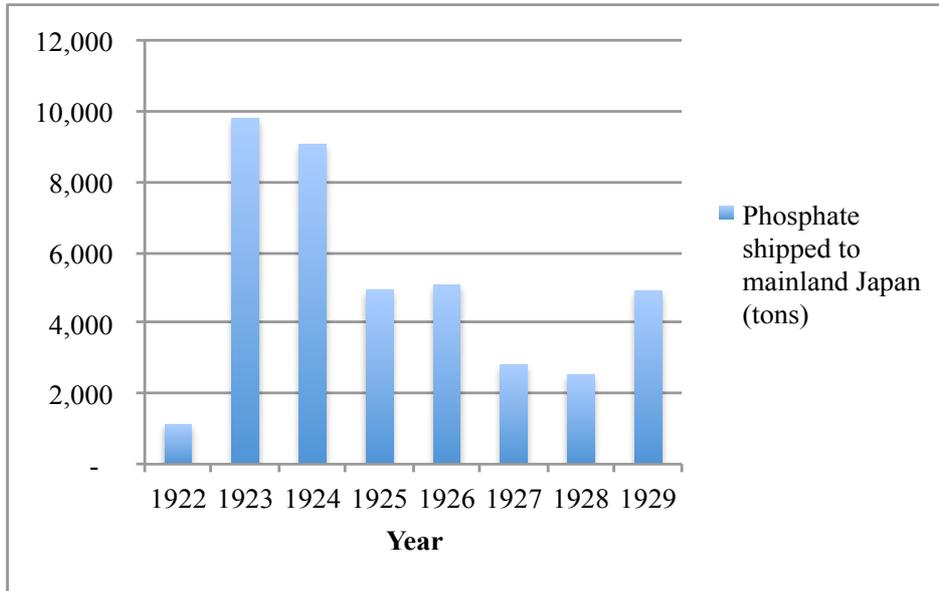
**Figure 4.4: Rasa Island Output and Workforce, 1912-1918**

Source: Tsunetō, *Discovery and Exploitation of Rasa Island*.



**Figure 4.5: Phosphate production on Nagashima (Itsuabāshima), 1922-1929**

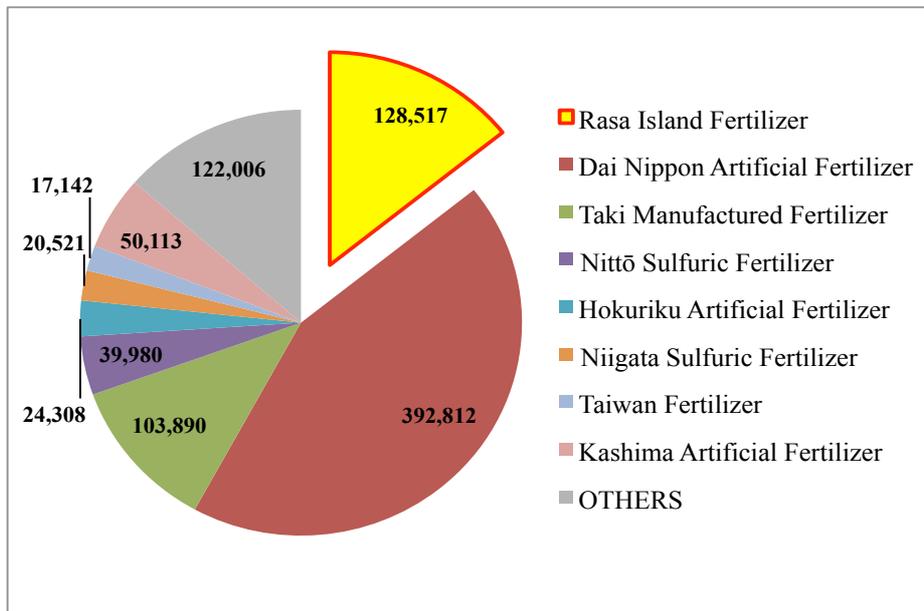
Source: Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi*, 48.



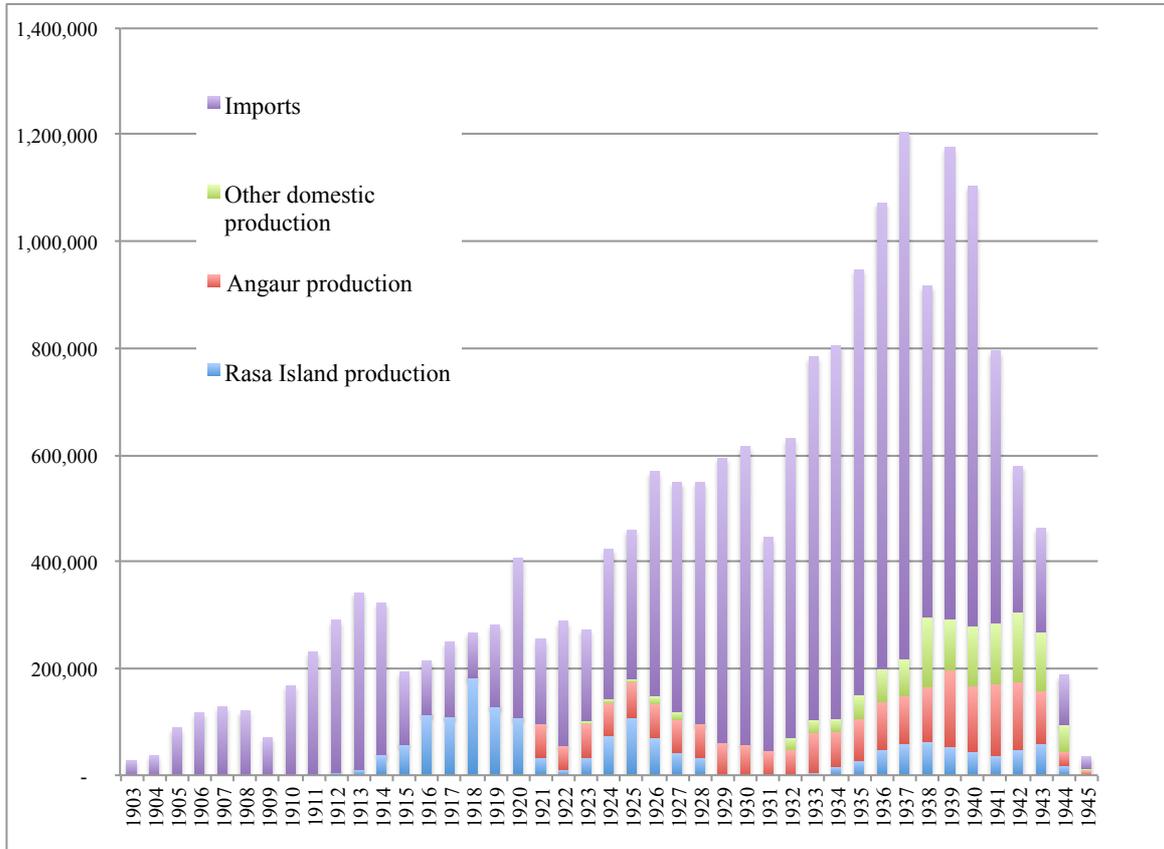
**Figure 4.6: Phosphate fertilizer production by company, 1924-1928**

Source: *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo* 1 January 1927, 28; 1 March 1929, 46.

Units are 1000 kan (1 kan = approx. 3.75kg.)

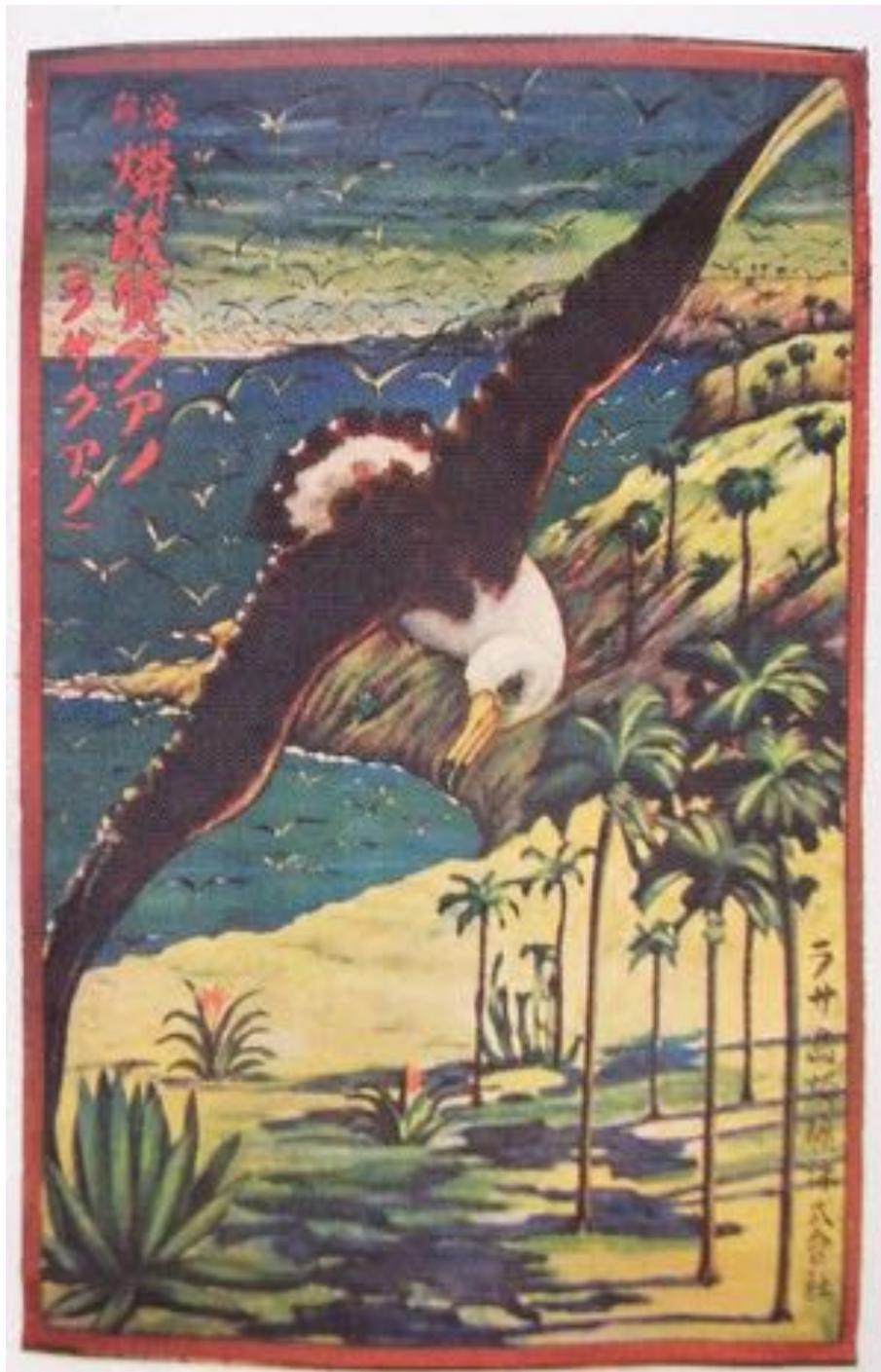


**Figure 4.7: Japanese raw phosphate production and imports, 1903-1945 (tons)**  
 Source: Kumazawa Kikuo, "Tsunetō Noritaka to Nihon no rinsan shigen," 58-59.

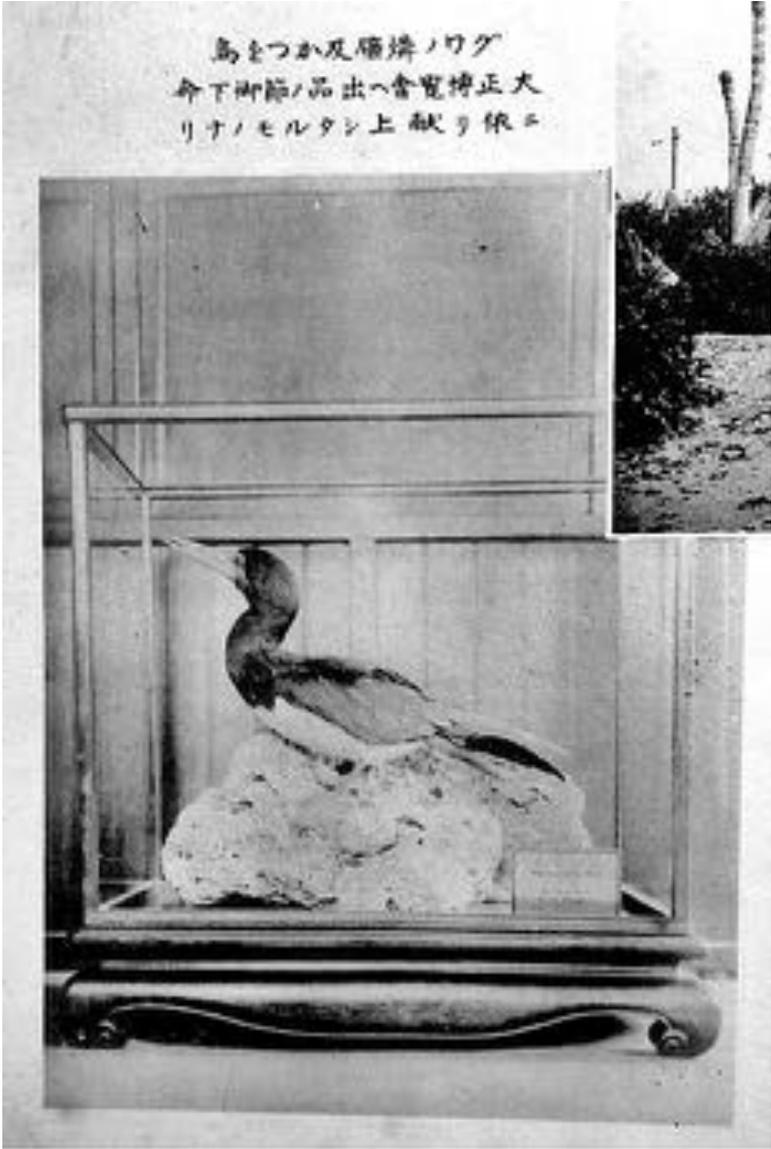


**Figure 4.8: “Soluble Phosphate Guano ‘Rasa Guano’”**

Source: Shinsendō Shoten Kabushiki Gaisha, *Shinsendō Shoten sōgo mokuroku* (Tokyo: Meiji Kyōiku Kakezu, April 1913)



**Figure 4.9: “Guano phosphate and pelican presented for display at Taishō Exhibition”**  
Source: Rasa-tō Rinkō Kabushiki Gaisha, *Rasa-tō shinkei* (Tokyo: Rasa-tō Rinkō Kabushiki Gaisha, 1919)



**Figure 5.1: Japan Post ¥20 stamp issued January 6, 1975**  
“Shizen hogo shirīzu: ahōdori” [Nature conservation series: the albatross]



**Figure 5.2: Hokusai, “In the Well of a Wave off Kanagawa”, c.1830**  
Source: Katsushika Hokusai, *Fugaku sanjūrokkei*: “Kanagawa oki nami ura”



**Figure 5.3: *Hotta kimpu*, “One type of seagull”, 1831**

Source: Hotta Masaatsu and Suzuki Michio, *Edo chōrui daizukan : yomigaeru Edo chōgaku no seika* “kanbun kimpu”.



**Figure 5.4: *Baien kimpu*: “Rai / ahōdori / bakadori”, 1839**

Source: Mōri Baien, *Baien Kimpu* (1839)



**Figure 5.5: Yamashina Yoshimaro examines his bird collection**

Source: <http://omugio.exblog.jp/20031395/> Last accessed November 3, 2014.



**Figure 5.6: Oliver L. Austin Jr. “Duck hunting”**

Source: Annika Culver (ed.), [“The Oliver L. Austin Photographic Collection”](#), Florida State University. Last accessed November 3, 2014.



**Figure 5.7: Oliver L. Austin Jr. with Japanese ornithologists and their families**

Source: Annika Culver (ed.), [“The Oliver L. Austin Photographic Collection”](#), Florida State University: [Untitled] Last accessed November 3, 2014. Austin stands far left; his wife fourth from left. Kuroda Nagahisa, who served as Austin’s personal assistant and would later head the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, stands third from right.



**Figure 5.8: Yamashina Yoshimaro, c.1946-9**

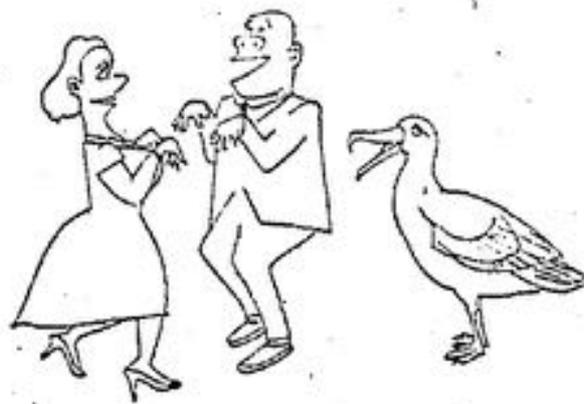
Source: Annika Culver (ed.), [“The Oliver L. Austin Photographic Collection”](#), Florida State University: “Yamashina” Last accessed November 3, 2014.



**Figure 5.9: “The fools who dance and the fools who don’t dance”**

Source: “Ahōdori: manbo odotte ’shūdan miai’.”

This cartoon puns on the Japanese word for albatross (“fool-bird”) and the lyrics to a popular folk dance.



**Figure 5.10: *The Albatross That Lived***

Source: Aoki Eiji, *Ikite ita ahōdori*. This book cover depicts Yamashina Yoshimaro helping elementary school children to construct a bird nesting box in the grounds of the National Diet Building. The grey-suited figure standing front-left is Nakanishi Godō.



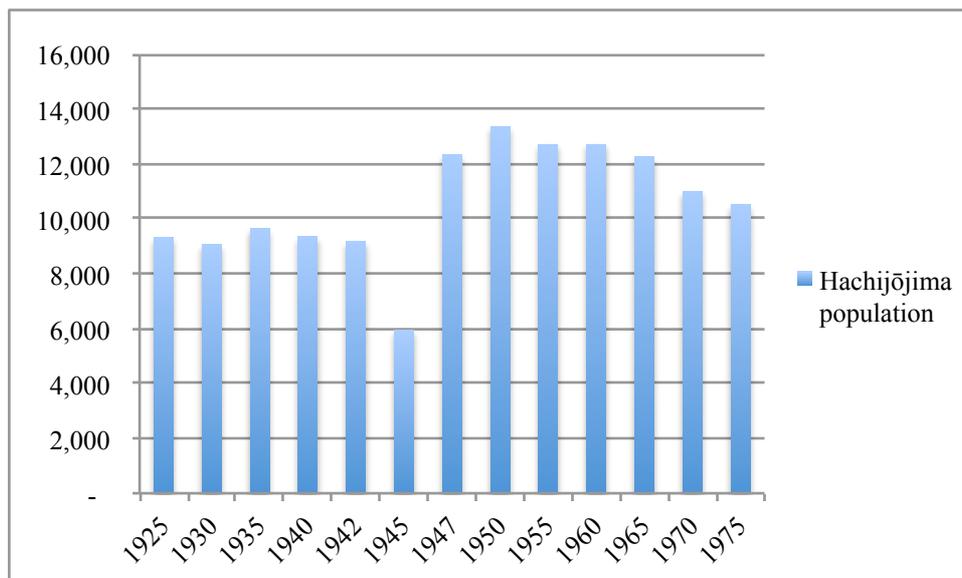
**Figure 5.11: “Albatrosses - all year round the same chirping: ‘Normalization!’”**

Source: *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 5 May 1961. This cartoon is a reference to ongoing diplomatic negotiations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, which coincided with the beginning of Bird Week. The triangular hats are an Edo-era trope used to represent Koreans.



**Figure 5.12: Hachijōjima population, 1925-1975**

Source: Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Inikai, *Izu 100-nen shi*, 1067-1068.



**Figure 5.13: Cattle ranching on Torishima, c.1933**  
Source: Yamashina Institute for Ornithology archives



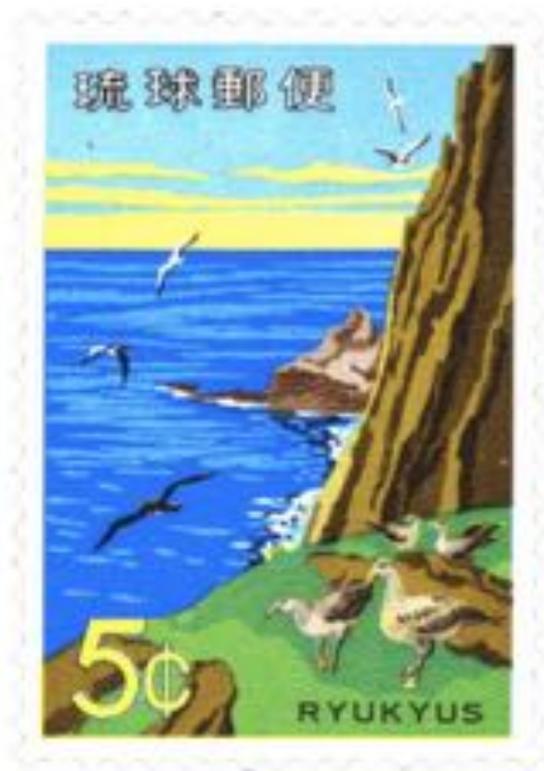
**Figure 5.14: Composite satellite view of Torishima, 1 January 1978**  
Source: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure & Transport National Land Web Mapping System  
A comparison with Tamaoki Han'emon's map of Torishima, drawn in 1887, shows how drastically the 1939 eruption altered the island's topography. (See [Figure 1.2](#))



**Figure 6.1: Taiwanese fisherman collecting seabird eggs on Kita Kojima, c.1968**  
Source: Asahi Shimbunsha, *Okinawa no kotō* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1979)



**Figure 6.2: “Kaichō to tori”**  
Source: Ryukyu Government Postal Service 5¢ stamp, issued April 14, 1972.



## APPENDIX II: STATISTICAL APPENDIX

**Figure 1.4: Japan Plumage Exports, 1883-1915**

Source: Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha Henshū, Nihon Bōeki Yōran (Tokyo: Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha, 1975), 30-31, 274. One catty = approx. 600g.

Year	Exports	
	catties	yen
1883	49,411	3,054
1884	68,988	5,036
1885	95,653	9,035
1886	116,055	9,790
1887	126,405	9,592
1888	53,309	5,327
1889	250,515	25,195
1890	252,704	39,107
1891	327,384	45,562
1892	304,706	46,548
1893	340,550	66,098
1894	367,919	76,087
1895	253,970	65,953
1896	390,512	84,983
1897	467,322	131,328
1898	542,151	135,936
1899	505,768	160,597
1900	593,591	184,162
1901	385,656	92,303
1902	365,030	81,171
1903	568,943	76,499
1904	475,924	96,181
1905	411,574	104,633
1906	515,465	104,794
1907	593,160	131,875
1908	644,881	167,114
1909	538,331	180,614
1910	639,688	119,478
1911	639,449	95,848
1912		76,243
1913		85,665
1914		78,348
1915		67,351

**Figure 1.5: Britain Plumage Imports, 1872-1930**

Source: Great Britain Board of Trade, *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom in Each of the Last Fifteen Years From 1879 to 1893: No. 41* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1894)

Time period	Imports	
	1000 pounds (lbs)	1000 pound sterling
1872-1880	2,444	7,471
1881-1890	6,746	13,837
1891-1900	10,732	11,692
1901-1910	14,362	19,923
1911-1920	7,397	9,376
1921-1930	193	81

**Figure 2.8: Hawaiian acreage under sugar cultivation, 1874-1898**

Source: Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 62.

Year	Acres under sugarcane cultivation
1874	12,225
1879	22,455
1882	39,350
1889	60,787
1898	125,000

**Figure 2.9: Hawaiian sugar exports, 1874-1893**

Source: Customhouse Reports, cited in *Ibid.*, 83.

Year	Sugar exported (lbs)	Rice & paddy exported (lbs)
1874	24,566,611	1,627,143
1875	25,080,182	2,130,234
1876	26,072,429	3,801,987
1877	25,575,965	5,263,357
1878	38,431,458	5,552,659
1879	49,020,972	4,831,628
1880	63,584,871	6,469,840
1881	93,789,483	7,785,070

1882	114,177,938	12,629,108
1883	114,107,155	12,987,705
1884	142,654,923	9,539,224
1885	171,350,314	7,367,253
1886	216,223,615	7,338,615
1887	212,763,647	13,684,200
1888	235,888,346	12,878,600
1889	242,165,835	9,669,896
1890	259,798,462	10,579,000
1891	274,983,580	4,900,450
1892	263,656,715	11,516,328
1893	330,822,879	7,821,004

**Figure 2.15: Visitors to the Bishop Museum by Race, 1899-1910**

Source: Bishop Museum Director's Reports, 1900-1911

Year	Whites	Hawaiians	Portuguese	Chinese	Japanese	Others	Total Visitors
1899	5,224	1,111	272	1,060	691	41	8,399
1900	3,437	1,319	251	1,213	705	15	6,940
1901	4,612	1,412	307	1,172	801	19	8,323
1902	4,046	1,145	398	1,766	1,168	13	8,536
1903	2,353	1,467	218	884	568	4	5,494
1904	5,077	2,216	776	2,384	2,178	41	12,672
1905	5,711	2,173	620	2,527	2,992	273	14,296
1906	4,659	1,499	584	2,101	2,265	386	11,494
1908	4,472	1,464	452	1,208	1,867	243	9,706
1909	4,723	1,218	440	1,287	4,000	178	11,846
1910	5,457	1,402	555	1,388	2,115	185	11,102

**Figure 4.1: Nitrogen content of fertilizer inputs, Japan 1890-1945 (ktons N)**

Source: *Norinsuisanshō Chōki Keizai Tōkei: Nōringyō, vol. IX*

Year	Total	Animal	Vegetable	Mineral	Compound
1878	16.4	16.4	12.2	4.2	0
1879	19.8	19.8	15.7	4.1	0
1880	18.2	18.2	14.2	4	0
1881	18	18	14	4	0
1882	14.4	14.4	10.5	3.9	0

1883	14.4	14.4	10.5	3.9	0	
1884	19.8	19.8	16	3.8	0	
1885	15.9	15.9	12.3	3.6	0	
1886	15.6	15.6	11.9	3.7	0	
1890	15.3	15.3	11.7	3.6	0	
1891	16.3	16.3	12.5	3.8	0	
1892	15.3	15.3	10.5	4.8	0	
1893	18.8	18.8	14.7	4.1	0	
1894	19.2	19.2	14.8	4.4	0	
1895	17.9	17.9	13.6	4.3	0	
1896	18.4	17.7	13.5	4.2	0.7	
1897	19.4	19	14	5	0.4	
1898	16.8	16.5	12.2	4.3	0.3	
1899	18.9	18.4	14	4.4	0.5	
1900	27.3	25.9	14.9	11	1.4	
1901	32.7	32	15.9	16.1	0.7	
1902	37.5	36.6	15.4	21.2	0.9	
1903	40	39	18.9	20.1	1	
1904	26.1	22.8	12.8	10	3.3	
1905	37.8	30.3	10.9	19.4	7.5	
1906	43.6	34.3	8.5	25.8	9.3	
1907	57.4	42.9	10.3	32.6	14.5	
1908	68	52.6	9.3	43.3	15.4	
1909	82.9	60.6	8.5	52.1	11.4	10.9
1910	79.7	48.5	8.7	39.8	17.8	13.4
1911	102.6	64.5	8.6	55.9	21.5	16.6
1912	94.9	58.4	10.1	48.3	17.5	19
1913	122.7	77.1	11.8	65.3	22.7	22.9
1914	112.7	69.6	11.5	58.1	22.8	20.3
1915	107.9	81.1	11.1	70	12.7	14.1
1916	112.4	84.5	10.2	74.3	13.6	14.3
1917	134.6	101.2	9.5	91.7	16.7	16.7
1918	153.5	117.7	8.9	108.8	16.9	18.9
1919	203.8	136	11.8	124.2	39	28.8
1920	168.6	109.7	12	97.7	41.7	17.2
1921	161.2	112.6	9.3	103.3	29.8	18.8
1922	164.3	109.6	9	100.6	33.6	21.1
1923	197.9	126.4	10.6	115.8	47.6	23.9
1924	187.5	111.6	12.2	99.4	44.5	31.4
1925	192	105.3	13.2	92.1	49	37.7
1926	245.2	131.6	14.1	117.5	75	38.6
1927	235.5	118.3	13.4	104.9	72.1	45.1
1928	248.7	104.7	14.8	89.9	83.2	60.8
1929	266.4	96.5	13.6	82.9	97.2	72.7
1930	254	97.7	11.5	86.2	102.7	53.6
1931	275	114.8	16.3	98.5	115.6	44.6
1932	244.8	83	20	63	113.9	47.9
1933	234	76.9	15.9	61	103.1	54
1934	252.6	89.4	12.4	77	108.2	55
1935	278.9	73.9	13.6	60.3	140.8	64.2
1936	349.4	84.7	23.2	61.5	195.5	69.2

1937	292.9	65.6	11.2	54.4	161.7	65.6
1938	362.1	74.6	9.3	65.3	198.4	89.1
1939	344.2	93.4	11.8	81.6	176.4	74.4
1940	346.2	43.4	9.5	33.9	258.9	43.9
1941	355.3	44	9.1	34.9	280.9	30.4
1942	363.1	79.7	10.8	68.9	283.4	0
1943	297.5	52.2	8.2	44	245.3	0
1944	234.5	49.5	4.1	45.4	185	0
1945	100.9	25.1	1.1	24	75.8	0

**Figure 4.2: Japan's Estimated Phosphate Deficit, c.1895**

Source: Tsunetō Noritaka, *Hinata kuni rinsan* (1896), 7-9

<b>ANNUAL PHOSPHATE CONTENT WITHDRAWN FROM SOIL</b>			
Crop type	Amount harvested (catties)	Phosphate con- tent	Phosphate withdrawn (catties)
Unpolished rice	1,674,635,840	0.54%	9,043,034
Wheat	138,853,844	0.79%	1,096,945
Barley	238,795,424	0.56%	1,337,254
Other wheat	243,547,436	0.75%	1,814,428
Chestnuts	129,102,988	0.85%	1,097,375
Soybeans	111,983,940	1.04%	1,164,633
Adzuki beans	12,847,280	0.85%	109,202
Corn	8,418,671	0.57%	47,986
Millet	34,687,830	0.57%	197,721
Sweet potato	568,371,606	0.09%	511,534
Potato	40,491,431	0.19%	76,934
Seeded crops	32,850,304	1.66%	545,315
Indigo	15,447,822	0.75%	115,859
Tea	7,608,368	0.80%	60,867
Mulberry & tobacco	7,643,203	0.53%	40,509
<b>TOTAL PHOSPHATE WITHDRAWN</b>			<b>16,986,432</b>

<b>ANNUAL PHOSPHATE MANUFACTURED (DOMESTICALLY)</b>			
Fertilizer type	Amount produced (catties)	Phosphate content	Phosphate pro- duced (catties)
Dried fish	7,023,802	3.5%	245,833
Fishmeal	33,597,625	4%	1,343,905
Oil-seed cake	20,000,000	2%	400,000
Cow & horse bonemeal	2,172,192	20%	434,438

Rice bran	124,085,732	3.78%	4,690,441
Human urine & excrement (combined)	3,104,123,475	0.125%	3,880,154
<b>TOTAL (DOMESTIC) PHOSPHATE INPUTS</b>			<b>10,994,771</b>

**Figure 4.4: Rasa Island Output and Workforce, 1912-1918**

Year	No. workers	Phosphate production (tons)
1912	360	5,616
1913	440	10,774
1914	594	38,294
1915	910	57,771
1916	1,550	113,942
1917	1,990	119,931
1918	2,100	182,409

**Figure 4.5: Phosphate Production on Nagashima (Itsuabāshima), 1922-1929**

Source: Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu, *Rasa Kōgyō 80-nen shi* (Tokyo: Rasa Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha, 1993), 48.

Year	Phosphate shipped to mainland Japan (tons)
1922	1,133
1923	9,790
1924	9,071
1925	4,924
1926	5,067
1927	2,826
1928	2,538
1929	4,913

**Figure 4.6: Phosphate fertilizer production by company, 1924-1928**

Source: *Keizai Zasshi Daiyamondo* 1 January 1927: 28; 1 March 1929: 46.

Company	1924-1928
Rasa Island Fertilizer	128,517
Dai Nippon Artificial Fertilizer	392,812
Taki Manufactured Fertilizer	103,890
Nittō Sulfuric Fertilizer	39,980

Hokuriku Artificial Fertilizer	24,308
Niigata Sulfuric Fertilizer	20,521
Taiwan Fertilizer	17,142
Kashima Artificial Fertilizer	50,113
Others	122,006
TOTAL	899,289

**Figure 4.7: Japanese raw phosphate production and imports, 1903-1945 (tons)**

Year	Imports (tons)	Domestic production				Total	Grand Total
		Rasa Island	Angaur	Daitōjima	Others		
1903	27,422					-	27,422
1904	36,640					-	36,640
1905	88,932					-	88,932
1906	116,313					-	116,313
1907	128,280					-	128,280
1908	120,127					-	120,127
1909	71,065					-	71,065
1910	168,230					-	168,230
1911	230,273					-	230,273
1912	284,725	5,656				5,656	290,381
1913	331,288	10,774				10,774	342,062
1914	285,097	38,294				38,294	323,391
1915	135,767	57,771				57,771	193,538
1916	99,701	113,942				113,942	213,643
1917	139,148	110,070				110,070	249,218
1918	84,527	182,409				182,409	266,936
1919	152,647	128,881				128,881	281,528
1920	297,651	108,111				108,111	405,762
1921	158,848	33,702	62,443			96,145	254,993
1922	233,024	10,477	44,537			55,014	288,038
1923	170,905	33,407	62,281	6,369		102,057	272,962
1924	279,612	73,368	61,861	8,114		143,343	422,955
1925	277,952	108,308	66,134	5,826	412	180,680	458,632
1926	420,715	69,587	63,827	14,164	717	148,295	569,010
1927	428,900	43,272	60,806	14,976	318	119,372	548,272
1928	451,994	33,849	62,988	-	-	96,837	548,831
1929	533,649	274	60,070	-	-	60,344	593,993
1930	557,937	-	57,488	305	-	57,793	615,730
1931	399,570	-	45,400	-	-	45,400	444,970

1932	559,246	-	47,334	23,804	-	71,138	630,384
1933	678,803	4,507	74,425	25,873	-	104,805	783,608
1934	698,977	16,791	64,807	24,271	-	105,869	804,846
1935	796,275	28,223	78,335	38,651	5,574	150,783	947,058
1936	871,172	48,866	89,226	39,654	22,148	199,894	1,071,066
1937	986,080	58,917	90,652	35,160	32,719	217,448	1,203,528
1938	621,061	62,144	104,153	30,980	98,452	295,729	916,790
1939	883,701	53,049	143,420	35,277	60,751	292,497	1,176,198
1940	822,623	45,033	122,467	46,638	66,108	280,246	1,102,869
1941	508,640	37,172	133,981	43,479	71,231	285,863	794,503
1942	272,336	47,569	127,057	62,957	68,453	306,036	578,372
1943	194,047	59,897	97,896	68,024	41,937	267,754	461,801
1944	91,699	18,229	25,769	23,340	28,204	95,542	187,241
1945	23,133	-	8,542	-	3,240	11,782	34,915

**Figure 5.12: Hachijōjima population, 1925-1975**

Source: Izu Shotō Tōkyō Ikan Hyaku-nen Shi Hensan Inkai, *Izu Shotō Tōkyō ikan 100-nen shi* (Tokyo: Tōkyō-to Tōsho Chōson Kai, 1981) 1067-1068,

Year	Hachijōjima population
1925	9,338
1930	9,067
1935	9,646
1940	9,346
1942	9,169
1945	5,935
1947	12,334
1950	13,359
1955	12,711
1960	12,718
1965	12,253
1970	10,989
1975	10,524

### APPENDIX III: ON THE ROAD TO OLD MIDWAY

Source: "Soldiers on Midway Take to Rhyming" *The Hawaiian Star*, 4 June 1907.

Out in the Western Ocean,  
Three thousand miles at sea,  
There's a little Isle awaitin'  
And I know It waits for me:  
For "Bill" has Issued orders,  
And to me they gently say:  
"Say Goodbye to 'Maud' and 'Nellie'  
You're goin' out to old Midway."  
On the road to old Midway,  
Where the Navy transports play,  
Where you feed the flying fishes,  
From your rations day by day.  
    On the road to old Midway,  
    Where the coral insects play,  
    Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
    To be occupied some day.  
Oh I'll be king of Midway,  
And I'll know my royal Job.  
For I'm a loyal blue Marine,  
And rule by right of God  
And if any Midway subject,  
Opens up his measly head,  
I'll grab him tightly by his ears,  
And kick him till he's dead.  
Kicked to death in old Midway,  
On the road to Hell today,  
But it's lucky that he's going,  
For it's better than Midway.  
    On the road to old Midway  
    Where the coral insects play,  
    Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
    To be occupied some day.  
"Uncle Sam" saw this island,  
A 'floating' so they say,  
And he hitched a cable to it,  
So it couldn't get a away,  
Then he looked the place all over,  
And he sent a cablegram:  
"Send some big Marines to Midway,

There's toehold in the sand,  
Hanging to a chunk of land,  
With a toe-hold in the sand,  
Would to God, it would grow bigger,  
So we'd have a place to stand.

On the road to old Midway,  
Where the coral insects play,  
Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
To be occupied some day.

Oh the Island it is sandy,  
And 'tis not a rural scene,  
But they give you emerald glasses,  
Just to make you think it's green,  
And the wind is always blowin'  
And the air's so full of sand,  
That your lungs are full of concrete,  
And your stomach's full of land.  
Coughin' concrete from a lung,  
Mixin' cement on your tongue,  
We could build the bloomin' barracks,  
If the bricks would only come.

On the road to old Midway,  
Where the coral insects play,  
Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
To be occupied some day.

I'll be a year on Midway,  
Then a raving maniac,  
And be driven round in Washington,  
In a black asylum hack,  
And I'll think I'm a soaring sea-gull  
Or a pensive albatross,  
And never have the sense to know,  
The sense that I have lost,  
Goin' "ratty" in Midway,  
Gettin' crazier every day,  
Till I got so awful crazy,  
That they took be [sic] far away.

On the road to old Midway,  
Where the coral insects play,  
Building up Marine Corps Stations,  
To be occupied some day.