

1 *Bonins of Contention*

Extraterritorial Empire and Borderland Citizenship in the Nineteenth-Century Pacific

We begin with a tussle over a gun, six hundred miles out to sea. It was 1863, and a motley crew of whalers had hauled anchor off the uninhabited island of Anijima to flense a sperm whale. Processing a dead whale is gruelling work. Its body must be lashed alongside ship and its blubber sliced into chunks, then boiled in an iron pot to extract the oil. The crew, already tired from hours of pursuing the whale in oar-powered longboats, must work quickly before the floating carcass is devoured by sharks.¹ So tempers aboard the *Ichiban Maru* would already have been frayed when the captain accused one of his crew members of shirking on the job, and confiscated the man's belongings as punishment. An everyday quarrel over compensation suddenly escalated, however, when the captain discovered that a pistol had been smuggled aboard ship. He promptly accused the man and his friend of piracy, ordered his crew to arrest the suspects, and hauled anchor in search of some higher authority who might resolve the dispute.²

Who that higher authority might be was not immediately obvious, for the crew of the *Ichiban Maru* consisted of a jumble of differing nationalities thrown together into the same boat by the same sweeping global processes. The exact location of the dispute only complicated matters still further. Anijima was one of the Bonin Isles (J: Ogasawara Shotō), a handful of tiny islands scattered deep in the Pacific Ocean. The Bonins had, until 1830, only the most fleeting history of human habitation. Indeed, their very name derives from a Japanese word meaning 'unpeopled isle[s]'.³ Yet by 1863 they had emerged as a small but vital provisioning hub within a vast trans-oceanic extractive economy. And the Bonin population, though few in number, was global in composition – hailing from islands across the Pacific

¹ Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 42–3; Richard Ellis, *Men and Whales* (New York: Lyons Press, 1999), 34–8.

² Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara Shotō*, 204.

³ *bunin-jima*. This archaic pronunciation of 無人島 differs from the modern word *mujintō*, a generic term for uninhabited islands.

but also from Japan, America and Europe. This mix of nationalities created what Ziad Fahmy has called a ‘jurisdictional borderland’ where, in the absence of established territorial sovereignty, a number of different governments strove to extend economic and legal protection to their citizens.⁴ And the *Ichiban Maru* may have been captained by a Japanese national under a Japanese flag, but the two accused crew members both claimed citizenship of the United States, an aspiring imperial power known for asserting its Pacific interests down the barrel of a gunboat.

The Bonin Islands thus make an ideal vantage point from which to survey the oceanic borderland of the North Pacific in the nineteenth century. How did the people who lived and laboured in this borderland space negotiate with their environment and with each other? How did they resolve the inevitable disputes that arose during a time of intense economic disruption and political instability? What forces drove people to colonise remote specks of storm-battered rock so far out to sea? And what factors contributed to the islands’ eventual transformation from borderland space to the outermost territory of the Japanese state?

To answer these questions I first trace the rise and fall of the global whaling industry, detailing the global conditions that made it possible and the effects that it wrought on environments, societies and people throughout the North Pacific. I then switch focus to examine the local histories that brought four different groups of settlers – Hawaiians, beachcombers, mainland Japanese and Hachijōjimans – to the Bonin Islands by the mid-nineteenth century. This set the stage for the *Ichiban Maru* incident, a petty dispute that soon spiralled into an international confrontation between Japanese, US and British diplomats. Finally, I explore the historical forces that transformed the Bonins from borderland space to bordered space: Japanese settler colonialism, yes, but also a calculated decision on the part of Anglo diplomats to slough off responsibility for a new, racially mixed generation of Bonin Islanders.

Global Whaling in the Pacific: Mobility, Empire and Extraterritoriality

Whaling was the earliest and most notorious of the many extractive industries that dominated the economy of the nineteenth-century Pacific (Figure 1.1).⁵ It also foreshadowed later activities such as bird-hunting and

⁴ Fahmy, ‘Jurisdictional Borderlands’. ⁵ McNeill, ‘Of Rats and Men’, 312.



Figure 1.1 Scrimshaw etching of Arctic whaling expedition on walrus tusk (n.d.)
Source: National Museum of Ethnology collection, Osaka

guano mining in important ways, most notably in its extreme mobility, its vulnerability to boom and bust cycles, and its lack of regard for any kind of sustainable resource management. Moreover it was, at the time, something fundamentally new. Japanese and Indigenous people throughout the Pacific have hunted whales for centuries but from around 1780, after whale sightings in the Atlantic became scarce, British, French and American whalers began venturing round Cape Horn into the Pacific.⁶ This represented both a step-change in scale and a profound transformation in the way the industry was organised. The actual techniques used to hunt did not change much at first, but sending an expedition half-way around the world on a voyage involved raising substantial venture capital funds, outfitting a much larger vessel, and recruiting captains and crew who knew how to sail the open ocean.⁷ The end purpose of the expeditions was also quite different: while earlier hunters had generally made use of all parts of the whale, global whalers jettisoned most of the carcass and focused exclusively on extracting oil and baleen.⁸ The former was turned into lamp oil through a complex industrial process of ‘pressing, fluxing

⁶ Jakobina Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore: Oceans and the Environment of Early Modern Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018); Randall R. Reeves, ‘The Origins and Character of “Aboriginal Subsistence” Whaling: A Global Review’, *Mammal Review* 32 no. 2 (June 2002).

⁷ Eric Dolin, *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 181; Lance E. David, Robert E. Gallman and Karin Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan: Technology, Institutions, Productivity, and Profits in American Whaling, 1816–1906* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 294–5; Tom Nicholas, *VC: An American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 12–13, 23.

⁸ McNeill, ‘Of Rats and Men’, 320–1; Ryan Tucker Jones, ‘Running into Whales: The History of the North Pacific from Below the Waves’, *The American Historical Review* 118 no. 2 (April 2013): 359; Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*, Ch.3.

and crystallising'; the latter was fashioned into whalebone corsets and other accoutrements.⁹ The exclusive focus on these two commodities does much to explain the boom and bust nature of the global whaling industry. The increasing availability of cheaper, cleaner-burning kerosene by the mid-nineteenth century sent demand for whale oil into a permanent decline, with catastrophic effects on the profitability of the industry as a whole.¹⁰

Global whaling also relied on a fundamentally different labour regime. Local whaling had been conducted at the level of individual fishing villages on a seasonal or simply opportunistic basis.¹¹ But the crews of global whaling expeditions worked under terms that were close to indentured labour. Many were pressed or blackbirded against their will into multi-year stints onboard, with no guarantee that they would be returned home at the end of it. Even those whalers who signed up voluntarily sometimes chose to jump ship along the way rather than endure the harsh working conditions. And because whaling crews earned their compensation as a share of the profit earned by the expedition as a whole, many ended up penniless or even in debt at the end of their voyage. The result was to create a kind of trans-Pacific maritime proletariat who drifted unmoored from port to port.

The sheer scale of global whaling also demanded much more elaborate logistical networks. Ships needed to restock on food, water and fuel, a need that became particularly pressing during long oceanic crossings where ports of call were scarce. And because expeditions lasted between three and four years on average, it became routine for captains to send their cargo home mid-voyage. This required secure transshipment networks, so that the harvested oil and baleen could arrive safely back at port without being lost or pilfered en route.¹² It required, in other words, a global regime that enforced private property rights and guaranteed the unimpeded flow of goods and people – what Robinson and Gallagher famously called an 'imperialism of free trade'.¹³

⁹ Dolin, *Leviathan*, 110, 356. ¹⁰ Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 48–9.

¹¹ Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*, 50; Noell Wilson, 'Whaling at the Margins: Drift Whales, Ainu Laborers, and the Japanese State on the Nineteenth-Century Okhotsk Coast', in *New Histories of Pacific Whaling*, ed. Ryan Tucker Jones and Angela Wanhalla (Munich: Rachel Carson Center for Environmental History, 2019), 57–64.

¹² Nicholas, VC, 18; David, Gallman and Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 46.

¹³ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review New Series* 6 no. 1 (1 January 1953): 1–15.

Techniques of gunboat diplomacy that were later used to force open Chinese, Japanese and Korean ports were earlier deployed to protect the whalers that called at islands throughout the oceanic Pacific.

These military interventions did not aim at territorial aggrandisement; rather, they constituted a kind of extraterritorial imperialism that asserted the right to selectively protect certain types of people and property. As Lauren Benton puts it, they did not so much 'corral law into conventionally defined jurisdictions' as create 'repeating sets of irregularly shaped corridors with ambiguous and shifting relations to imperial sovereignty'.¹⁴ And they triggered profound political, social and economic ructions throughout the Pacific.

In the following two sections we shall explore the effects of this extraterritorial imperialism on two different countries, Hawai'i and Japan. We shall see how the whaling industry and the gunboat diplomacy that supported it destabilised existing political structures and, at the same time, helped create a new kind of oceanic contact zone in the North Pacific. Human settlement on the Bonin Islands was a part of this new borderland space. And it was governed to a particularly stark degree by the same extraterritorial logic that shaped the rest of the Pacific, East Asia and the world.

From Hawai'i to the Bonins

Hawai'i might seem a quixotic place to begin a history of Japan's borderlands, but there are good reasons to do so. For one thing, the majority of the first Bonin settlers hailed from Hawai'i. Secondly, in the mid-nineteenth century Hawai'i and Japan were in somewhat similar positions. In later years the fates of the two countries would diverge dramatically – one was colonised by a more powerful neighbour, and the other went on to become an imperial power in its own right – but at the time our story begins both were relatively weak states within a rapidly globalising Pacific world. (In addition, the events of Chapter 3 substantially play out in post-annexation Hawai'i, so a brief pre-history here may help provide relevant background context.)

In the decades following the encounter with Captain Cook, the Kingdom of Hawai'i had become thoroughly interwoven in global webs

¹⁴ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xii.

of commerce, resource extraction and empire.¹⁵ King Kamehameha I had succeeded in unifying the archipelago, in large part using weapons and mana (supernatural power) supplied by the British, and the new monarchy had prospered.¹⁶ It had secured pledges of loyalty from prominent political figures, including some foreigners.¹⁷ It had exploited Hawai'i's position on North Pacific whaling and trading routes to turn the kingdom into a provisioning hub for passing ships. And it had coordinated the felling of the islands' sandalwood groves for export to China as incense.¹⁸ It had used this revenue to purchase top hats, frocks and all the accoutrements of Western civilisation, and to despatch a mission to London to secure recognition from the paramount imperial power of the time.¹⁹

This diplomatic recognition almost certainly helped to protect Hawai'i from outright annexation, at least up until 1898. But it did not translate into full territorial sovereignty. On the contrary Hawai'i, like many other Pacific islands, remained vulnerable to attack by any warship that happened to pass through. As early as 1806 Britain passed an act 'extending jurisdiction over crimes committed under its flag on the high seas to crimes committed by its subjects on Pacific Islands . . . Naval warships were to arrest British miscreants and inflict war-like punishment on island communities for destroying British property and massacring British crews.'²⁰ In 1826 King Kamehameha III issued an edict to the effect that foreigners should be subject to Hawaiian law, but it was widely flouted, and by 1840 combined pressure from Britain, France and the United States had succeeded in codifying rather haphazard techniques for enforcing extraterritorial privilege into a system of trial by consular court.²¹

¹⁵ Chang, *World and All the Things*, 33–35.

¹⁶ Juri Mykkänen, *Inventing Politics: A New Political Anthropology of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 38.

¹⁷ Stuart Banner, 'Preparing to be Colonized: Land Tenure and Legal Strategy in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii', *Law & Society Review* 39 no. 2 (2005): 283.

¹⁸ Ralph Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Volume I: Foundation and Transformation, 1778–1854* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 125.

Banner echoes nineteenth-century European observers in describing early Hawai'i as a quasi-feudal society. Banner, 'Preparing to be Colonized', 281.

¹⁹ Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 151.

²⁰ Lisa Ford, 'Law' in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, eds. David Armitage and Alison Bashford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 223.

²¹ Juri Mykkänen, *Inventing Politics: A New Political Anthropology of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 38; Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom* 1, 129, 166–7.

During the same period, huge numbers of Hawaiians left their home island and ventured abroad. By 1846 an astonishing one in five men between the ages of fifteen and thirty were living outside Hawai'i, crewing whalers, mining guano on desert islands or panning for gold in the California desert.²² But these expatriate Hawaiians did not enjoy the same protection as the average British or American sailor on shore leave in Honolulu. Though Hawai'i actually boasted a remarkably widespread network of consular officials, no Hawaiian (or Tahitian or Fijian) warship could intervene to defend the rights of an islander accused of manslaughter in a New Bedford bar brawl – for no such warships existed.²³

Such was the vulnerability of the Hawaiians who, from 1830, began to settle on the Bonin Islands. Frustratingly little survives in the historical record to recover the perspective of these early colonists. But we know they spent the first months on the Bonins clearing jungle from the islands' few pockets of flat land, subsisting on the pith of cabbage trees and the meat of the turtles that swam from across the Pacific to lay their eggs on the islands' beaches. We also know that they introduced a portmanteau of flora and fauna into the islands, much as their ancestors had done elsewhere in Polynesia for thousands of years.²⁴ (Indeed, the Hawaiian and Bonin archipelagoes lie at similar latitudes, and have similar climate and geology.)²⁵ We know that they grew sweet potato, taro, yams and other root vegetables, and ate them by mashing them up into poi, a Polynesian culinary staple.²⁶ And that they also grew Indian corn, pumpkins, watermelon, sugar cane, lemon trees and tobacco. And we know that they fished using Polynesian-style outrigger canoes, that they kept chickens and hogs, that they permanently transformed the ecology of the islands by releasing goats to graze the

²² Gregory T. Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai'i: Native Labor in the Pacific World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 77.

²³ By 1887 the Kingdom of Hawai'i 'maintained 103 legations and consulates worldwide'. That same year Hawai'i did in fact purchase a former British trading schooner and outfit it as a naval ship, but 'its impression on the Western powers with their multiple ironclad warships in the region could only be symbolic'. See Gonschor, *A Power in the World*, 37, 98.

²⁴ McNeill, 'Of Rats and Men', 304–5.

²⁵ Nanyan Guo, 'Environmental Culture and World Heritage in Pacific Japan: Saving the Ogasawara Islands', *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 7 issue 17 no. 3 (12 April 2009).

²⁶ Scott Kramer and Hanae Kurihara Kramer, 'The Other Isles of Aloha', *The Journal of Hawaiian History* 47 (2013): 7, 12.

hillsides and that they even trained dogs to catch white-tipped sharks in the shallow water off the islands' long sandy beaches.²⁷ Hawaiian language and culture permeated life in the new colony: Japanese castaways who washed up on the Bonins in 1839 described the islanders as dressing in the Hawaiian style and speaking a mixed Hawaiian-English pidgin.²⁸ All of which is to say that these early settlers did a huge amount to imprint Hawaiian society and ecology onto the islands during the early years of the colony (Figure 1.2).

Hawaiians were not the only Pacific Islanders who settled on the Bonins. Over time people from Saipan, Guam and as far afield as the Marquesas Islands came to live on the islands. This was a function of the extreme mobility that characterised life on the islands in these early years, for many of the new arrivals alighted from passing whalers, frigates and merchantmen. Indeed, the settlement on the Bonin colony was not so much a self-sufficient agricultural community as a maritime provisioning depot.²⁹ Merchant vessels plying the trade route between China and the Pacific Northwest stopped off to stock up on food, water and timber, and ships from as far afield as Dunkerque, New Bedford and Auckland hunted the sperm, right and humpback whales that migrated along the 30th parallel, feeding on the plankton that welled up from the ocean into the waters surrounding the islands.³⁰

This constant trans-oceanic traffic provided opportunities to barter provisions such as firewood and turtle meat, and to charge pilot fees to navigate the islands' perilous reefs. It also enabled the islanders, already migrants at least one time over, to continue living startlingly mobile lives. Some signed up for stints aboard whalers or sealing expeditions to the Kurile Islands, for example.³¹ Others wearied of life on the islands and left altogether, never to return. They were replaced by new arrivals from elsewhere, so that the population of the islands was constantly in flux to the point at which the distinction between visitor, sojourner and permanent colonist became a blurry one.

²⁷ David Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders, 1830 to the Present: Narrating Japanese Nationality* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 30–1. On the use of outrigger canoes in the Bonins, see NA FCO 46/195 Robertson to Parkes: 141.

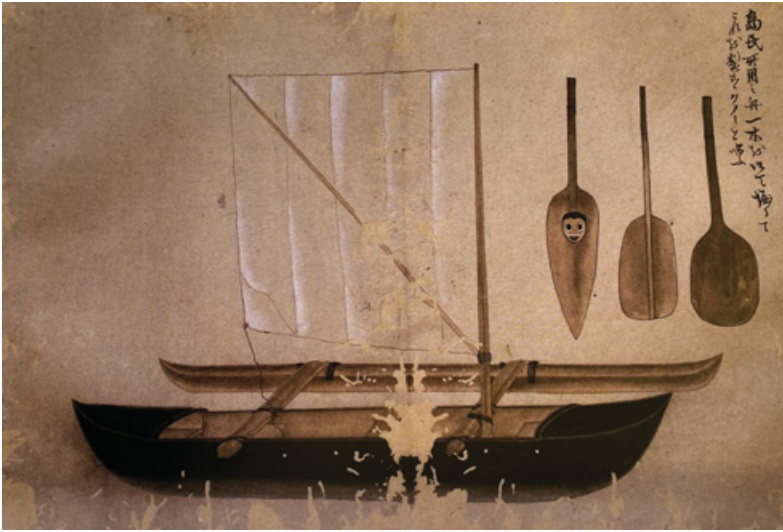
²⁸ Kramer and Hanae, 'The Other Isles of Aloha', 17.

²⁹ Chapman, *Bonin Islanders*, 29–30.

³⁰ Tim D. Smith, Randall R. Reeves, Elizabeth A. Josephson and Judith N. Lund, 'Spatial and Seasonal Distributions of American Whaling and Whales in the Age of Sail', *PloS One* 7 no. 4 (April 2012): 3.

³¹ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 287.

(a)



(b)



Figure 1.2a Outrigger canoe used by Bonin Islanders (c.1862)

Figure 1.2b Bonin Islander women dancing on Hahajima (c.1862)

Source: Obana Sakusuke, *Ogasawara-jima zu-e* (Tokyo: Ogasawara-mura Kyōiku Inkai, 2009). Ogasawara-mura Education Committee collection

Pacific Islanders and Beachcombers

Another type of person lived alongside the Hawaiians in this early Bonin settlement: beachcombers.³² Beachcombers were ubiquitous in the nineteenth-century Pacific. Almost always male, they hailed from Europe or the Neo-European settler colonies but spent large stretches of their lives drifting from port to port trying their hand at fur-sealing, whaling or stevedoring, or trading in sundry goods such as rum, textiles or guns.³³ In their extreme mobility beachcombers resembled Hawaiians, and indeed they often worked alongside them, doing similar work in similar conditions. Some beachcombers even ingratiated themselves within Polynesian chiefly households – many pledged oaths of loyalty to the Hawaiian monarchy, for example.³⁴ But at the same time, beachcombers took care to assert their citizenship of those states that had any kind of naval presence in the Pacific – Britain, of course, but also France, Russia and the US – mindful of the extraterritorial protection this might afford. This set them quite apart from the Hawaiians, for they were the beneficiaries of the very same extraterritorial imperialism that constrained Hawaiian sovereignty during this period. They were politically (if not always ethnically) white.

From the outset on the Bonin Islands, beachcombers were substantially outnumbered by Hawaiians. Yet they exploited their privileged status in order to style themselves as the leaders of the new settlement. Two British citizens, Millichamp and Mazzaro, had secured cautious support for the colonisation venture from the British consul at Honolulu prior to departure. They spoke of their Hawaiian co-settlers as their ‘servants’ or even ‘slaves’; claims corroborated by a visiting British sea captain who, in 1837, reported that the Hawaiians had been bound to work for the Britons for a period of years before earning the right to live freely on the islands.³⁵ A second

³² For a discussion of ‘beachcombers’ versus ‘kanaka’ see Ishihara Shun, *‘Guntō’ no rekishi shakaigaku: Ogasawara Shotō, Iwōtō, Nihon, America, soshite Taiheiyō Sekai* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 2013) 40–2. For the European ‘seizure’ of the word kanaka see Chang, *World and All the Things*, 35.

³³ On Neo-European settler colonies see Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³⁴ Thomas, *Islanders*, 49.

³⁵ Chapman, *Bonin Islanders*, 29–31. Indeed, by the 1860s at least some Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders had managed to establish themselves as

faction was led by Nathaniel Savory, a Massachusetts-born American who, much like Millichamp and Mazzaro, looked to his own government to underpin his authority. In 1853, a flotilla of American warships under the command of one Commodore Matthew Perry called at Peel Island (J: Chichijima), the main site of the largest Bonin settlement. Perry had been charged with opening up a steamer route between California and China, and Savory was able to convince him that the Bonins would make an ideal coaling station.³⁶ The commodore conducted a cadastral survey as a prelude to annexation by the United States, and before he left pressured the islanders to ratify a provisional constitution that appointed Savory as headman.³⁷

Negotiations such as these produced on the Bonins a society that in many resembled the broader Pacific world. It consisted of two classes, beachcombers and Pacific Islanders, politically distinct insofar as the former could use their citizenship to seek the protection of vastly more powerful governments than the latter.³⁸ That said, this protection did not always materialise. Even at the height of the Pacific whaling industry the Bonin Islands remained isolated from the outside world for large stretches of time. Fragmentary external accounts suggest that the islanders often resolved their disputes by relying upon what Ishihara Shun calls 'local law', and what other, less sympathetic observers called 'club law' or 'lynch law'.³⁹ The islanders were also often at the mercy of the very sailors upon whom they relied for their living. On at least two occasions, in 1835 and 1842, the British consul at Honolulu wrote to London on behalf of the islanders, 'praying for protection against vessels employed in the whale fishery'.⁴⁰ In one notorious incident in 1849, whalers ransacked the islands for livestock, food supplies and other stores, as well as relieving Savory of two thousand dollars and his

independent cultivators. See Katsu Kaishū, *Kaigun rekishi* 5 no. 11 (Tokyo: Kaigunshō), 26–7, 31–8.

³⁶ Webster to Aulick (10 June 1851) cited in 'Japan—the Expedition', *The American Whig Review* 15 (June 1852), 514.

³⁷ NA FCO 46/195 Robertson to Parkes (13 December 1875): 124.

³⁸ Francis L. Hawks, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the Years 1852, 1853 and 1854 Under the Command of Commodore M.c. Perry, United States Navy, By Order of the Government of the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Congress, 1856), 203.

³⁹ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 240; NA FCO 46/195 Robertson to Parkes (27 December 1875), 123.

⁴⁰ Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 29, 35.

Hawaiian wife (who may have been a willing conspirator in the whole affair).⁴¹

It is also the case that, privately at least, officials in London and Washington, DC, were often indifferent to the fate of their citizens on the Bonin Islands. Although a British naval captain had in fact made landfall on the islands in 1827 and claimed them for the British Empire, Colonial Office bureaucrats declined to ratify the annexation.⁴² Neither did the US State Department ever officially annex the islands – Perry’s enthusiasm notwithstanding. As for combating piracy, British officials responded to their own consul’s entreaties with the bland observation that ‘the island of the Bonin is beyond the limits to which British cruisers ordinarily go’.⁴³ The US Secretary of State was even more scathing, writing of his compatriots that ‘by resorting to such remote spots on the globe’s surface, under such circumstances, they may fairly be held to have deliberately abandoned the United States without purpose of returning, and therefore to have relinquished the rights as well as duties of citizens’.⁴⁴ Comments such as these reveal that the protection afforded by beachcomber citizenship did not always materialise. It often existed as a hope – or a threat.

Japan in the Extraterritorial Pacific

After Perry left the Bonin Islands, he let the water of the Kuroshio current sweep his ships north towards another promising site for a coaling station. Japan was in many ways very different to Hawai‘i, but in other ways similar. Japan was, of course, larger and more populous than Hawai‘i by orders of magnitude. And by the time Hawai‘i was unified in 1795, Japan had enjoyed nearly two centuries of uninterrupted peace under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Whereas Hawai‘i was largely cut off from the outside world between the initial Polynesian colonisation and the arrival of Captain Cook, Tokugawa Japan maintained diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with its neighbours. Indeed, the Tokugawa were accustomed to conducting their diplomacy from a position of strength, making a great show of welcoming tribute missions from Korea, the Ryūkyū

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴² Frederick William Beechey, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific and Beering’s Strait* (Amsterdam: U.A. Israel, 1968), Ch.6.

⁴³ Chapman, 29–30. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

Kingdom, the Ainu, the Khmer, and even the Dutch East India Company.⁴⁵

Yet for all these differences, the Tokugawa Shogunate eventually found itself enmeshed in the same extraterritorial imperialism that had ensnared the Kingdom of Hawai'i, for the same decentralised political structure that had kept the peace domestically also rendered Japan vulnerable to the vicissitudes of gunboat diplomacy. Its political system was highly decentralised, with large swathes of the country ruled by powerful domainal lords who enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. And the Shogunate possessed no real navy to speak of, beyond a few coastal patrol boats tasked with intercepting smugglers.⁴⁶ In 1808 a British frigate sailed into the port of Nagasaki and extorted food and supplies from the harbourmaster at cannon-point – exposing the country's lack of military preparedness in the face of the latest naval technology.⁴⁷ By the 1820s whalers flying British and American flags were being regularly spotted not only along the Pacific coastline but deep into the Sea of Japan. Some called at coastal fishing villages to secure provisions, and when one of these encounters descended into violence the Shogunate implemented a 'shell-and-repel' policy in the hope of deterring future interactions.⁴⁸ The policy was abandoned in 1842, however, after word reached Japan of Qing China's defeat against Britain in the First Opium War.⁴⁹ And when Commodore Perry's flotilla of warships steamed into Edo Bay the Shogunate decided that discretion was the better part of valour and accepted his demand to open up ports to American merchants.

Within five years the Shogunate had negotiated and signed treaties not only with the United States but also with Britain, France, Russia and the Netherlands. These treaties granted similar concessions to

⁴⁵ Ronald Toby, 'Carnival of the Aliens: Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture', *Monumenta Nipponica* 41 no. 4 (1986): 415–56; Mark Ravina, *To Stand with The Nations of the World: Japan's Meiji Restoration in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 60; Travis Seifman, 'Performing "Lūchū": Identity Performance and Foreign Relations in Early Modern Japan' (PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2019).

⁴⁶ Noell Wilson, *Defensive Positions: The Politics of Maritime Security in Tokugawa Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 80, 115–18.

⁴⁸ David L. Howell, 'Foreign Encounters and Informal Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan', *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 40 no. 2 (Summer 2014): 309.

⁴⁹ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, 67.

those granted by Hawai'i a few years earlier, and also by Qing China, the Kingdom of Siam, the Ottoman Empire and many other states that found themselves drawn into the ambit of extraterritorial imperialism during this period.⁵⁰ The most galling concessions were the limits on tariffs, which undermined a long-existing ban on bullion exports and would end up playing havoc with local commodity prices. Being forced to allow foreigners to reside in certain Japanese port cities, henceforth known as treaty ports, also grated. Compared to these, the clauses granting consular protection to those foreigners did not initially raise much concern among Tokugawa diplomats. Plural jurisdictions were already central to the Tokugawa legal code: domainal lords exercised broad autonomy within their fiefs, and indeed the entirety of early modern Japanese society was organised into self-governing status groups whose leaders assumed group responsibility for punishing their members according to the Shogun's legal code. Shogunal officials assumed that the consular courts mandated in the new treaties would function as just another vessel in this 'container society'.⁵¹

Belatedly, however, the officials realised that consular courts were not simply institutions for enforcing judgements handed down by the Shogunate; they had the power to undermine those judgements by ameliorating or even waiving punishment. Interrogation by torture was an integral part of the Tokugawa penal system but consular officials viewed the practice as barbaric; yet trial by jury raised the possibility that the accused might escape sanction altogether. Other quirks of the consular court system also weakened Shogunal authority over foreign nationals. In September 1860, a Briton named Moss flouted a ban on duck-hunting in the vicinity of the Shogun's castle. When confronted by Japanese officials he fired upon them, seriously wounding one of them. Initially the consular courts issued Moss with a stiff fine and ordered him deported to Hong Kong to serve three months of imprisonment. But on 23 January 1861 the Hong Kong courts overruled this decision and ordered Moss released, even awarding damages for wrongful imprisonment into the bargain. To add insult to injury, the foreign merchants'

⁵⁰ Turan Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*.

⁵¹ Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*, 30–2, 91–2. For the concept of early modern Japan as a container society see John Whitney Hall, 'Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1 no. 1 (Autumn, 1974): 48.

community in Yokohama raised funds to pay Moss' fine for him, so that he effectively got off scot-free for his crime.⁵²

When offences were committed *against* foreigners, on the other hand, British diplomats showed little patience for the container society's juridical pluralism. When the British merchant Charles Richardson was slain by retainers of Satsuma Domain in September 1860, the British ambassador demanded reparations from Satsuma; when Satsuma prevaricated, a squadron of British gunboats shelled the domainal capital of Kagoshima until the reparations were paid.⁵³ Disputes between Japanese and treaty-port-dwelling foreigners thus regularly flared up into crises that roiled both domestic and foreign affairs, and played no small part in hastening the Shogunate's eventual collapse in 1868.

The Tokugawa Colonisation of the Bonins, 1861–1863

All that said, the Shogunate was by no means passive in the years leading up to its demise. On the contrary, it embarked on a number of efforts to combat the foreign threat. To boost the country's coastal defences it began relaxing the strictures on military service, hitherto limited to the warrior caste, by forming commoner militias.⁵⁴ It gave domain lords increased autonomy to build up their own military capability (a decision that would backfire disastrously when the newly empowered domains turned their guns on the Shogunate itself).⁵⁵ It began purchasing steam-powered warships via the existing Dutch East India Company trading post at Nagasaki. And it started setting up military colonies at the outer limits of the realm in the hope of countering foreign territorial encroachment.⁵⁶ For centuries the Shogunate had banned ethnic Japanese from settling in its northern borderland, hoping to forestall confrontations with Indigenous groups and, later, the Russians. But in 1855 it reversed this policy and began encouraging domains to colonise the islands of Hokkaidō, Sakhalin and the Kuriles.⁵⁷

⁵² 'Summary of News from the Far East', The London & China Telegraph, 18 March 1861; Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 133.

⁵³ Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*, 93.

⁵⁴ D. Colin Jaundrill, *Samurai to Soldier: Remaking Military Service in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

⁵⁵ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, 84. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵⁷ David L. Howell, *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (Oakland: University of California Press), 61; Kikuchi Isao,

It was as part of this policy that the Shogunate began planning to colonise the Bonin Islands as well. The Shogunate was well aware of the existence of the Bonins. As early as 1670 some castaway fishermen had returned, reporting on the existence of two deserted islands far out to sea. Each was no more than forty kilometres in circumference, with a sweltering climate ('in summer it becomes so hot that you cannot walk barefoot on the rocks'), swarms of flies and mosquitoes, but also teeming with shellfish, sea bream and snapper, octopus, whales and a host of unfamiliar plants and fish.⁵⁸ The report so piqued the Shogunate's curiosity that it despatched an ocean-going galleon to survey the islands with an eye to possibly settling them, although nothing ever came of the venture.⁵⁹ Various other colonisation schemes were floated over the years, most notably by the scholar Hayashi Razan during a panic about Russian incursion in the 1780s. The vastly more perilous security environment of the mid-nineteenth century, however, changed the political calculus – especially once word got out that a small band of foreigners had established a colony on the islands already.⁶⁰

In 1860, therefore, the Shogunate dispatched one of its new Dutch-built warships for the Bonins. The ship made landfall at Port Lloyd, the Bonins' main settlement, on 17 January 1862. Officials made preliminary inquiries, visiting islanders in their homes laden with an array of gifts: alcohol, textiles, snuff-boxes and toys for the children.⁶¹ Nathaniel Savory was summoned to a tent erected on the beach within clear range of the *Kanrin Maru*'s guns. There Mizuno Tadanori, a court aristocrat and high-ranking Shogunal official, proceeded to explain to him that the Bonins had in fact been Japanese territory ever since their discovery by a samurai named Ogasawara Sadayori, and that the government had now returned to resume its administration.⁶² He

Goryōkaku no tataikai: Ezochi no shūen (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan), 19–22.

⁵⁸ Tanaka Hiroyuki, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara: Ōbei no hōgeisen de sakaeta ikan no shima* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1997), 5–6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁰ Hyman Kublin, 'The Ogasawara Venture (1861-1863)', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14 (1951): 268; Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 74, 157.

⁶¹ Kikuchi Sakujirō, *Bakumatsu Ogasawaratō nikki* (Tokyo: Ryokuchisha, 1983), 56–7.

⁶² Kublin, 'The Ogasawara Venture', 275. This story was almost certainly apocryphal, but circulated widely at the time and appears to have largely been taken at face value.

then issued a bilingual English-Japanese law code that protected the islanders' rights to the land they currently cultivated, but forbade them from cultivating new land without permission.

As an attempt at asserting territorial sovereignty, Mizuno's mission initially appeared to be a success. The islands' existing population generally agreed to abide by the law code, and to acknowledge that the islands belonged to Japan in a very material sense. In one telling exchange Savory insisted to Mizuno that the feral goats that roamed the islands belonged to him, for he had imported them from his home country. Mizuno retorted that the goats might be Savory's, but the grasses and trees they grazed on were Japanese. Savory seems to have accepted this argument, for he subsequently agreed to apply for permission before hunting them.⁶³

More importantly, neither Britain nor the United States protested Japan's claim to administer the islands. British assent was tacit, but the American ambassador to Japan went so far as to explicitly recognise this 'reclamation of sovereignty' so long as Japan promised to 'protect' American merchants who were resident on the island.⁶⁴ British and American diplomats might even have supported the Japanese claim. To the extent that either government had a Bonin policy, it was to keep the islands open as ports for trade and to prevent them from falling into the sphere of influence of the other. On the other hand, neither Britain nor the US actually wanted to go to the trouble of administering the islands directly. In this sense, having a weak state such as Japan administer the Bonins was ideal – both as a cost-saving measure and to prevent the islands from falling into the hands of a strategic rival.⁶⁵

Territorial sovereignty had its limits, however, and the Tokugawa colonisation project was quickly bedevilled by the problem of how to govern the islands while respecting the extraterritorial privileges claimed by some of its inhabitants. The presence of Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders did not exercise Mizuno much, and indeed early reports dispatched from the island display a striking lack of interest in the 'kanaka' – a term that originally simply meant 'human being' in Hawaiian but in the mid-nineteenth century was used as a derogatory

⁶³ Kikuchi, *Bakumatsu Ogasawaratō nikki*, 61.

⁶⁴ OEC Ogasawara jūmin taiwashi: Taunsundo Harisu, 2 December 1861.

⁶⁵ For a thorough discussion of this geopolitical calculus see Takahiro Yamamoto, 'Balance of Favour: The Emergence of Territorial Boundaries Around Japan, 1861–1875' (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 2015): 210.

term for Pacific Islanders more generally.⁶⁶ This reflected an assessment that dealing with ‘kanaka’ was unlikely to cause diplomatic headaches for the Tokugawa. Beachcombers, however, were another matter entirely – for any Bonin resident who could claim citizenship of an imperial power such as Great Britain, France, Spain or the United States was entitled to extraterritorial protection according to treaties that the Tokugawa had signed with those countries. For precisely this reason the detailed interviews recorded by Tokugawa officials reveal an exquisite concern to determine the nationality of beachcomber.

Complicating the question of extraterritorial jurisdiction further was the Shogunate’s attempt to found a colony of permanent Japanese settlers on the Bonins. To recruit settlers Mizuno looked to another remote Pacific island, Hachijōjima, that lies roughly midway between mainland Japan and the Bonin Islands along the same oceanic ridge. For most of recorded history Hachijōjima was so remote as to be, in a literal sense, the edge of the known world.⁶⁷ Early modern Japanese cartographers often conflated it with the demon island of Nyōgashima, said to be populated by lascivious cannibal women who ensnared sailors through erotic reverie.⁶⁸ Actual life on Hachijōjima was probably not quite so much fun, for the island’s annals are filled with tales of wrenching poverty and horrific famines. These were diagnosed by Japanese annalists as the result of chronic overpopulation, which seemed to recommend the island as a recruitment site for potential settlers.⁶⁹

Even more promisingly, like other regions of Japan that ended up sending large numbers of people overseas, the island already had

⁶⁶ Mizuno would later gloss ‘kanaka’ as ‘races of the southern islands’ (*nantō no jinshu*). See Katsu Kaishū, *Kaigun rekishi* 4 no. 10 (Tokyo: Kaigunshō, 1889), 9. During his initial survey of the island his delegation only bothered to record one interview with a ‘kanaka’ – a man named ‘Jako’ (ジャコ). Jako seems to have divided his time between sharecropping Savory’s land in Okumura and working his own plot of land in Fukurozawa. But even then Mizuno did not bother to ask where Jako had come from, or how he had arrived on the islands. See OEC Ogasawara jūmin taiwashō; Katsu, *Kaigun rekishi* 5 no. 11: 24, 31–4.

⁶⁷ Nelly Naumann, *Japanese Prehistory: The Material and Spiritual Culture of the Jōmon Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 54.

⁶⁸ D. Max Moerman, ‘Demonology and Eroticism: Islands of Women in the Japanese Buddhist Imagination’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36 no. 2 (2009): 357.

⁶⁹ Kawasaki Fusagorō, *Edo jidai no Hachijōjima: kotō ku no kyūmei* (Tokyo: Tōkyō-to, 1964), 171.

a tradition of out-migration within the borders of Japan itself (Figure 1.3).⁷⁰ Since the seventeenth century the Shogunate had used Hachijōjima as a penal colony, and the annual ships that dumped prisoners on the island returned carrying second and third sons from islander families who set up branch villages on the mainland.⁷¹ Hachijōjima also maintained a government office in Edo, primarily for the purpose of marketing the islands' much sought-after silk brocade. This meant that it was a relatively simple manner for the Shogunate to enlist a Hachijōjima official for the initial scouting expedition.

The official, Kikuchi Sakujirō, spent several days scaling Peel Island's steep hillsides (at one point nearly tumbling to his death), but then returned home persuaded that the Bonins had potential as a destination for out-migration. He summoned Hachijōjima's village headmen together, and presented them with a proposal.⁷² The Shogunate would allocate the colonists as-yet-uncultivated land and a gift of five *ryō* each, and also provide food and housing 'for as long as it took for you to be able to weave your own clothes'.⁷³ He also tempted them with spiritual rewards: 'As the founding ancestors of the islands, you will be worshipped by your descendants as if you were *kami*'. Exiles were forbidden from enlisting, but poverty was not an obstacle. Colonists were required to be of good character and unmarried; skilled artisans such as carpenters and blacksmiths were also promised return passage to Hachijōjima at the end of fixed-length contracts if they desired.⁷⁴

Kikuchi succeeded in recruiting a total of thirty-eight colonists, the majority of whom were landless.⁷⁵ Like the Hawaiians before them, they travelled to the Bonins bearing suites of crops, livestock, technologies and cultural practices to help them colonise the new islands. On arrival they set about establishing a new settlement in the next bay along from Port Lloyd, and started clearing, ploughing and seeding farmland with tools

⁷⁰ Martin Dusinberre, *Hard Times in the Hometown: A History of Community Survival in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), Ch.6.

⁷¹ Kawasaki, *Edo Jidai no Hachijōjima*, 208, 212–13.

⁷² Kikuchi Sakujirō, *Bakumatsu Ogasawaratō nikki* (Tokyo: Ryokuchisha, 1983), 64.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 196, 215; Inamura Hiromoto, 'Ogasawara-jima ni okeru shiseki oyobi enkaku', *Rekishi Chiri* 48 (1926): 233.

⁷⁴ Kikuchi Sakujirō, *Bakumatsu Ogasawaratō nikki*, 196–7; Okuyama Ikuko, 'Hachijōjima ni okeru jinkō ryūshutsu katei to sono tokushitsu: omo ni Meiji shoki kara Dai-Ni Sekai Taisen made', *Chigaku Zasshi* 95 no. 1 (1986): 49.

⁷⁵ Ikuko, 'Hachijōjima ni okeru jinkō ryūshutsu': 49.



Figure 1.3 Hachijōjima Islanders gather to send off a ship (c.1845)
Source: Shigeyama Takanobu, *Izu Shichitō emaki* (1845). Columbia University C. V. Starr collection

provided by the Shogunate and cultivars brought from Hachijōjima.⁷⁶ This choice of site suggests that Mizuno initially planned for the Japanese settlers to form a distinct community from the Hawaiians and beachcombers. All the Tokugawa planning for the colony suggests a primarily terrestrial vision of settler colonialism aimed at attaining agricultural self-sufficiency. Indeed, if the Hachijōjimans had only stuck to farming their own plots of land after their arrival this might have made the job of administering the islands much easier.

This was not the case however, for the new arrivals soon found themselves drawn into the Bonins' maritime economy. This was in large part thanks to a man named Nakahama 'John' Manjirō, whose remarkable career had begun in 1841 when, as a fourteen-year-old fisherman, he had been swept out to sea and washed up on a desert island teeming with giant birds. He had then been rescued by an American sea-captain, studied English and navigation in Massachusetts, travelled the world crewing New England whalers, gotten rich in the San Francisco gold rush, and eventually returned to Japan, where he had been arrested for flouting the Shogunate's ban on overseas travel. He survived this ordeal and was later able to parlay his linguistic and intercultural fluency into an appointment as official translator aboard Mizuno's Bonin colonisation project.⁷⁷

So taken was Nakahama by the abundant seas surrounding the islands that he decided to martial his prior experience and set up his own whaling operation. And his close government ties helped him persuade the Shogunate that development of the whale fishery was essential to ensuring the success of the Bonin colony. The Shogunate provided extensive state backing for his venture. It rented the boat, paid the crew's salary, and also provided Nakahama with employment as a translator during the off-season. In return, Nakahama agreed to hire a crew comprised mainly of Hachijōjiman colonists.⁷⁸ To train them he also hired six beachcombers who had prior experience in the New Bedford whaling fleet, and were thus familiar with latest technological

⁷⁶ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 187.

⁷⁷ For Nakahama's account of his overseas adventures see Ikaku Kawada, *Drifting Toward the Southeast: The Story of Five Japanese Castaways – a Complete Translation of Hyoson Kiryaku (a Brief Account of Drifting Toward the Southeast) as Told to the Court of Lord Yamauchi of Tosa in 1852 by John Manjiro* (New Bedford: Spinner Publications, 2003).

⁷⁸ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 204.

developments (such as the explosive harpoon) that were new even to Nakahama.⁷⁹ One of these was a US national by the name of William Smith who had recently absconded from a steamer en route from St. Petersburg to Nagasaki, then hidden out in the hills until it left port. Another, George Horton, had sailed aboard Perry's expedition but had jumped ship when the flotilla stopped off in the Bonins, and resided there ever since.⁸⁰

It was these two men whom Nakahama accused of piracy after an exhausting session of whale-flensing. The dispute started local but ended up spiralling into a major diplomatic incident. Nakahama first returned to Port Lloyd, the Bonin Islands' main harbour, and turned Smith and Horton over to face trial. In doing so, he placed the Japanese magistrate there in a difficult position. The two men had been accused of a crime against a Japanese national, aboard a ship sailing under Japanese colours, in waters of islands that were supposed to be Japanese territory. On the other hand, Japan's treaty with the United States stated that any Americans resident on Japanese soil had the right to trial in consular courts. To complicate matters further, the same treaty also forbade foreigners from residing outside the limits of designated treaty ports. As Port Lloyd had not been designated a treaty port, Smith and Horton were technically in violation of Japanese law merely by being on the islands in the first place. Yet by 1862 Horton had lived in the Bonins for almost a decade, since before Japan began to administer the islands.

In the event, the Japanese magistrate punted. After consulting with Savory and other prominent Bonin beachcombers he despatched the two suspects to Yokohama aboard the *Ichiban Maru* to face trial in a consular court.⁸¹ The ensuing trial partly vindicated Nakahama's accusation, but also exposed the way in which extraterritorial imperialism helped to defend the interests of beachcombers and, by doing so, compromised Japan's territorial sovereignty over the Bonin Islands. The court found Smith guilty, jailed him for four months, and then banned him from

⁷⁹ Many areas of mainland Japan, such as Wakayama, Kochi and Aomori, had long histories of coastal whaling. See Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*; Jonas Rüegg, 'Business, State and Environment in the Making of Japan's Kuroshio Frontier', in *Oceanic Japan*, ed. Stefan Hübner; Nadin Heé, Ian Jared Miller and William Tsutsui (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, forthcoming).

⁸⁰ Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 214–15. ⁸¹ *Ibid*, 219.

entering Japan. But it found in favour of Horton, demanding that he be returned to his landholdings on the Bonin Islands. When Tokugawa officials refused, the US consul fired off a blistering note, threatening to unleash ‘the naval force of the United States’ unless Horton was either returned to the Bonins or compensated with an indemnity of \$32,000. Japanese officials eventually caved, and decided to pay the indemnity.⁸²

From Borderland to Bordered Land

In 1863 the Shogunate abruptly decided to abandon the Bonin colonisation project. The Hachijōjimans packed up their belongings and returned home almost as swiftly as they had arrived. The exact reasons for this decision are still somewhat mysterious. One theory is that a new faction with different policy priorities came to power within the Shogunate. Another is that the Shogunate simply decided that any project that raised the likelihood of disputes between Japanese subjects and foreigner citizens was more trouble than it was worth. The full ramifications of the Horton affair only became clear *after* the decision to evacuate was taken, so could not have influenced it.⁸³ But they certainly illustrated the potential pitfalls of the project, and in later years Japanese officials would cite the risk of potential conflicts with foreigners as a reason against resuming colonisation.⁸⁴ Indeed, when the Japanese government did resume administration of the islands some twelve years later, the same issues soon re-emerged.

Much had changed in the intervening years. In 1868 the Tokugawa Shogunate collapsed, overthrown by a coalition of rebellious domains and imperial courtiers. Western diplomats, frustrated by what they saw as the Shogunate’s intransigence and double-dealing, provided covert support for the rebels. A new government took power, ruling in the name of the young Meiji emperor. It embarked on an ambitious project to dramatically reshape the Japanese polity: centralising power, standardising legal codes and sweeping away the elaborate, decentralised

⁸² Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*. 64-5; Department of State, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Message of the President to the Second Session Thirty-Eighth Congress* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), 67.

⁸³ For instance, the US consul did not issue his verdict on the Horton case until August 1863, two months after the Hachijōjiman colonists were evacuated. See Tanaka, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara*, 208–9.

⁸⁴ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 225–6.

structure of the container society to create a direct relationship between the state and its citizens.⁸⁵

As part of this self-consciously modernising project, the new Meiji government also embarked on an effort to transform the country into a fully sovereign state according to the emerging logic of territoriality. But it immediately confronted exactly the same diplomatic headaches that had plagued its predecessor. In 1871 a delegation of diplomats embarked on a world tour aimed at restoring tariff autonomy and abolishing foreign extraterritorial privileges, but returned in failure.⁸⁶ Meiji diplomats made more headway in demarcating Japan's borders with neighbouring states. But even here progress was halting. In 1872, just as the new government was abolishing the old feudal domains, it counter-intuitively established a new one by having the King of the Ryūkyū Islands swear an oath of vassalage to the Meiji emperor. This fudge was designed to avoid alienating China; the Ryūkyū kings had been sending tribute to both countries for centuries – a fact that both the Qing and the Tokugawa had chosen to ignore. Meiji diplomats worried that a bald declaration that the Ryūkyūs were Japanese territory would alienate its powerful neighbour and waited another nine years before finally deposing the king and establishing Okinawa Prefecture. Even after this, the southernmost border of the new prefecture was not delimited until well into the 1880s.⁸⁷

Similarly, the new Meiji government achieved a diplomatic success in negotiating a territorial border between Japan and Russia. Tokugawa diplomats had waged a fruitless campaign to have Russia recognise Japan's sovereignty over the southern half of the island of Sakhalin, but had succeeded in only in establishing the principle of 'mixed residency'. In theory this had meant that the two countries would jointly administer the island as a Russo-Japanese condominium; in practice it had led to chaos.⁸⁸ The Meiji government resolved the matter by the simple expedient of ceding its claim to Sakhalin, in return for Russian recognition of Japan's sovereignty over the Kurile Islands. But even this success was at first a qualified one. Early Japanese attempts to colonise the group were frustrated by American sealers' tactic of using

⁸⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of the Tokugawa-Meiji transition in global context see Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*.

⁸⁶ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, 141–4.

⁸⁷ Bukh, *These Islands Are Ours*, 223.

⁸⁸ Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment*, 89; Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, 92.

extraterritorial privileges to violate Japan's anti-poaching regulations with impunity. Eventually the government decided to evacuate its Kurile settlements entirely rather than risk provoking a diplomatic confrontation with the United States.⁸⁹

The Meiji government's attempt to (re)claim the Bonins proceeded in a similarly chequered pattern. In many ways, beachcomber management represented an even more daunting challenge to Japanese rule than it had a generation previously. In 1862 only a handful of Bonin residents could claim beachcomber status, with the rest hailing from Hawai'i or other Pacific islands. But by 1876 many of those beachcombers had fathered children by Pacific Islander wives, with the result that a whole new generation of Bonin Islanders might possibly be able to claim beachcomber citizenship by paternal descent. A Japanese census conducted in March 1877 estimated, cautiously, that of the seventy-one people 'resident' on the island as many as fifty-seven could claim citizenship of either Britain, the US, France, Portugal or Spain – all countries that had signed extraterritorial treaties with Japan.⁹⁰

The diplomatic uncertainty about the jurisdiction to which beachcombers and their families should be subject bedevilled the Meiji government's early efforts to administer the Bonin Islanders. In 1875 an expedition led by Obana Sakusuke, a veteran of the Tokugawa expedition, sailed for the Bonins to inform their inhabitants that Japanese administration had resumed. No sooner had it departed, however, than the British consul at Yokohama dispatched a gunboat hot on its heels. The official reason for the gunboat's visit was to investigate a complaint by a Briton called Webb, who had written to the consulate two years earlier asking for help in redressing a property dispute. But it was also a fairly unsubtle means of asserting extraterritorial sovereignty over those British citizens residing on the islands.

Webb's complaint was, in its labyrinthine complexity and sprawling spatial scope, fairly typical of the borderland Pacific. Millichamp, one of the original 1830 colonists, had cleared a plot of land known as Blossom Fields on the northern tip of Peel Island. In 1851 Millichamp had left the islands for the Spanish colony of Guam, 1,500 kilometres to the south, but the cadastral survey drawn up by Commodore Perry two

⁸⁹ Toshihiro Higuchi, 'The Nature of Unequal Treaties' paper delivered at the Association of Asian Studies annual conference, Washington, DC (24 March 2019).

⁹⁰ Obana Sakusuke, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 1 no. 19 (Tokyo: Yūunsha, 2014), 37.

years later nevertheless listed Blossom Fields as his property. At some point after this Webb had claimed the fields for his own, and succeeded in having the Tokugawa Shogunate's 1862 expedition recognise his ownership of the land in its own cadastral code. Subsequently Webb, too, left the Bonins to set up a sawmill on even more remote Ascension Island in the Carolines. But the sawmill venture ended in disaster, and when Webb returned to the Bonins he found Blossom Fields occupied by a Frenchman named Leseur who had visited Millichamp on Guam and bought the deed issued by Perry from him.⁹¹

These sort of squabbles were a common feature of life on the Bonins, but the dispute over Blossom Fields had an unusual significance. For one thing, by the time Webb returned from the Carolines Blossom Fields had become a particularly valuable piece of real estate, at least by Bonins standards: it now supported not only Leseur and his family of four but also two families of sharecroppers. Secondly, Webb was an important figure in Bonin Island society: he had first arrived in 1847, which made him a veritable old-timer among a population that was constantly in flux; he was the closest thing the Bonins had to a pastor, baptising the majority of children born on the islands;⁹² and, perhaps most importantly, the death of Savory in 1874 left him as the only islander who could read and write, and therefore a vital line of communication with the outside world.⁹³ Indeed, it was this very literacy that enabled Webb to call for consular support in the first place. His request flew in the face of the logic of territorial sovereignty, for he was asking the British government to help him defend a title granted by the Japanese government against a rival title that was endorsed by an official of the United States. But in the context of the nineteenth-century Pacific it made a certain amount of sense, for as we have seen the British government regularly asserted the right to adjudicate disputes involving its subjects, even if they occurred within the territory of other countries.

The British consular aide, Russell Robertson, arrived at Port Lloyd two days after the Japanese expedition. He promptly summoned Obana's officials aboard the deck of his gunboat, and invited them to

⁹¹ UKNA FCO 46/195: Robertson to Parkes (13 December 1875), 115.

⁹² Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 95.

⁹³ Obana, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 1 no. 19: 'Zaitō kaku kuni jinmei zen-koseki no gi o-todokesho' 37; Russell Robertson, 'The Bonin Islands', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 9: 20 October 1875–12 July 1876 (Tokyo: Hakubunsha, 1888), 138.

watch as he interviewed Webb about the details of his complaint. He then suggested that the two governments launch a joint investigation into the Webb–Leseur dispute. The officials gave a non-committal reply, quite correctly perceiving it as an attempt to undermine Japan’s territorial sovereignty over the Bonins. This refusal to engage created something of an impasse, whereby the Japanese expedition then watched warily as Robertson and his men traipsed around the island, conducting enquiries and generally making the presence of Her Majesty’s Government felt.⁹⁴

This caution eventually paid off. After completing his investigation, Robertson ultimately declined to issue a ruling on the Webb–Leseur dispute, and after two weeks returned to his ship and made sail back for Yokohama. There the matter lay until six months later Webb, frustrated by the lack of British consular assistance, eventually turned to Japanese officials for help instead. But Obana tartly rejected his suit, ruling that Leseur should be entitled to Blossom Fields as he had been the one cultivating it when Japanese officials had returned to the island the previous year.⁹⁵

That British diplomats did not ultimately challenge Obana’s ruling was in one sense a diplomatic victory for Japan. Unlike the dispute between Nakahama, Smith and Horton, the Webb–Leseur dispute did not end up being tried in a consular court. Instead, it was resolved through the Japanese justice system. Still, this did not mean that Anglo governments had yielded the principle of extraterritoriality entirely, for heated diplomatic discussions continued over what it might mean to subject Anglo nationals in the Bonins to Japanese law. The British ambassador continued to insist to the Japanese foreign minister that British nationals resident in the Bonins be subject to the trial through the consular courts.⁹⁶ And the US ambassador noted with alarm that proposed custom regulations for the Bonins would violate Japan’s treaty obligations ‘in so far as they subject citizens of the United States to trial and judgement in Japanese tribunals’.⁹⁷

In response the Japanese government decided to resolve the issue by taking a different tack, pressuring islanders to relinquish their citizenship entirely. In 1876, Obana ordered all Bonin residents to enter their

⁹⁴ UKNA FCO 46/195; Robertson to Parkes (13 December 1875), 127.

⁹⁵ Obana, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 2 no. 109: ‘Ei no Uebu Butsu Rezuwaa Susaki-mura jisho shusso no ketsumatsu’, 122–3.

⁹⁶ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 258. ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86–7.

names into the government's new nationwide family register, thereby renouncing their existing citizenships and 'naturalising' as subjects of the Japanese emperor. To convince the islanders he offered a mix of threats and blandishments. Naturalisation would be rewarded with gifts of clothing, blankets, tobacco and alcohol, and money to buy farming implements, furniture and building materials for housing. Refusal, however, would leave the islanders bereft of protection from Japanese law.⁹⁸ But Robertson got wind of this plan and fired off a memorandum reminding the islanders that 'by becoming Japanese subjects they would place themselves under Japanese laws and would ... forfeit all rights to British protection'. This was a coded warning to the islanders, but also to the Japanese government as well.⁹⁹

As a result, only five islanders obeyed the naturalisation order. Of these, three were Pacific Islanders who had jumped ship from an American frigate nine years previously. Within what passed for Bonin society they had relatively low status, all living as subordinate members of households headed by beachcombers. And all were in Japanese eyes viewed simply as 'kanaka' prior to their naturalisation. Two of them, Kopepe and Friday Tomoto, originally hailed from the Marquesas, an island group that at the time was under only the most nebulous form of colonial 'protection' by France. Whatever their affective sense of belonging they might reasonably have felt that in renouncing their Marquesan nationality they were not giving up something of much practical diplomatic value. The third 'kanaka' to naturalise, Sam Tempory, came from a mysterious island recorded as Tamantsu (タマツ島). Only two years after becoming a Japanese citizen he joined the crew of a passing whaler, never to return.¹⁰⁰

The other two applicants for Japanese citizenship were colonial subjects of European powers: a Bermuda-born Briton and a Manila-born Spaniard. Both men had arrived in the Bonins only a few years previously and had married Japanese wives who were themselves recent arrivals. They, too, were relatively marginal members of Bonin society, both spatially and economically, living essentially as sharecroppers renting plots of land from Leseur at Blossom Field. The Briton, Myers, even wrote to the British consulate explaining that he

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 259–60. ⁹⁹ Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ Obana Sakusuke, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 4 no.107 (Tokyo: Yūunsha, 2014): 'Kikajin Samu Tenporii jōseki taitō no ken', 81–2.

feared being murdered by another islander and hoped that Japanese citizenship might offer him a modicum of protection.¹⁰¹ Tellingly, the Japanese government handled their cases with much more delicacy, despatching diplomatic notes to inform the British and Spanish embassies of their naturalisation.¹⁰²

Still, even this effort was only partially successful. The British consul retorted that until the Japanese civil code had an internationally recognised naturalisation law on the books, it would not even be theoretically possible for a British citizen to become Japanese. This was a particularly shrewd riposte for it exploited the truth that the definition of Japanese citizenship was indeed still in flux, as the Meiji government struggled to knit together a welter of village and domain-level censuses into a national household register system.¹⁰³ Of course Japan was hardly alone in this respect, for British citizenship was not exactly a clearly demarcated category either: confusion over whether or not children of mixed Anglo-Indian parentage were British nationals persisted until the end of the British Raj, for instance.¹⁰⁴ But this did not matter. The realities of nineteenth-century imperialism meant that Britain reserved the right to decide the limits of the Japanese body politic, if not in a territorial sense then certainly in a juridical one.

The End of Beachcomber Sovereignty

In 1882, six years after Obana had first ordered them to, the remaining Bonin Islanders agreed to enter their names in Japan's household registry, implicitly forsaking their right to extraterritorial protection from their countries of birth. This date marks the point at which Japan gained, to all intents and purposes, full territorial sovereignty over the Bonin Islands. In one sense, it represents the triumph of sustained diplomatic, juridical and economic efforts to transform the archipelago

¹⁰¹ Obana Sakusuke, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 2 no.52 (Tokyo: Yuūnsha, 2014): 'Kikajin Marisu Ei ryōjikan to sho ōfuku shokan utsushi', 49.

¹⁰² Obana, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 1 no.18: 'Zaitōjin nyūseki no gi honshō e ukagaesho', 34.

¹⁰³ Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 90–1. In the event, Japan did not enact a naturalisation law until 1899. On the origins of the Meiji Japanese household register system, see Endō Masataka, *Koseki to kokuseki no kingendaishi: minzoku, kettō, Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Valerie E. R. Anderson, 'The Eurasian Problem in Nineteenth-Century India', (PhD diss. The School of Oriental and African Studies, 2011), 37.

into a predominantly Japanese settlement. These efforts included resuming the effort to transplant colonists from Hachijōjima, so that by the time the islanders agreed to naturalise they were already outnumbered by new arrivals more than four to one.¹⁰⁵ It also involved placing restrictions on immigration from outside Japan, a measure aimed at preventing new beachcombers from settling on the islands.

But other factors were at work, too. For one thing, by the 1870s the Bonins had conspicuously failed to live up to their promise as a maritime provisioning hub. The shift to steam power meant that more and more ships could cross the Pacific in one leg without needing to stop for provisions. Traffic from whalers had diminished also, partly as a result of overhunting but also because lamp oil manufacturers were struggling to compete with cheaper, better-smelling kerosene.¹⁰⁶ Surviving log-books from American whalers show a sharp drop-off in whale sightings near the Bonins between 1850 and 1875, and almost no sightings after 1875.¹⁰⁷ As a result the number of ships that made port at the islands declined also. Between January 1833 and July 1835 some twenty ships had called at Port Lloyd, and Savory claimed that at one point even thirty or forty per year had not been unusual. By the 1870s the average was barely one a year. Fewer ships meant fewer opportunities to barter turtle meat for matches, linens or grog, or to sign on for stints crewing whalers. With the islands increasingly isolated from the broader trans-Pacific extractive economy, life on the Bonins increasingly became a matter of eking out a living through agriculture. Given this, it is not obvious that many beachcombers would have been drawn to live on them even if they had been permitted to.¹⁰⁸

Other factors external to Japanese government policy may also have helped bring an end to beachcomber sovereignty as well. While no direct testimony survives to shed light on why the islanders chose to naturalise in 1882, the immediate catalyst seems to have been the death of Webb. It was Webb who had led the resistance against

¹⁰⁵ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 268.

¹⁰⁶ David, Gallman and Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan*, 148; Demuth, *Floating Coast*, 61; Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore*, 29–32, 184.

¹⁰⁷ Smith et al., 'Spatial and Seasonal Distributions of American Whaling and Whales in the Age of Sail', 14.

¹⁰⁸ Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*. 30; Conversation between Nathaniel Savory and Mizuno Tadanori, 26 January 1862. OK vol.8. cited in Yamamoto, 'Balance of Favour', 202–3; UKNA FCO 46/195 Robertson to Parkes (23 December 1875).

naturalisation, in large part thanks to his existing relationship with Robertson, and through him with the British consulate at Yokohama, but also because he was the only one of the islanders who could read and write.¹⁰⁹ Bereft of literacy, the remaining Bonin Islanders lost their only possible means of communicating with the British or American diplomatic staff who might come to their aid.

The islanders may also have felt that, even if they had been able to make contact with Anglo embassies, there was little chance that help would be forthcoming. After the deaths of Savory and Webb, the vast majority of the population were second-generation Bonin Islanders, and under both British and US law could claim nationality only by proving they had been born within wedlock to a parent born in the respective country. Yet the official account of Perry's expedition did not regard 'children born on the islands', even those born to American fathers, as 'native Americans'.¹¹⁰ With the notable exception of Thomas Webb's family, British consular officials regarded the relationships between Hawaiians and beachcombers with distaste. Whereas Japanese officials recorded female partners as *tsuma* (meaning partner in a legal sense), Robertson preferred 'mistress'.¹¹¹ And he reported that Nathaniel Savory's Chamorro widow:

had been living as the companion of two other men at different times prior to her becoming a companion of Savory. It is questionable therefore how far [she and her six children] . . . may be entitled to American protection, and any other claims to American [or British] citizenship by the settlers would be of the same shadowy nature.¹¹²

Remarks such as these whiff of mingled prurience and racism, but casting aspersions on the parentage of islanders also served a practical purpose. As we have seen, imperial states often viewed beachcombers as something of a nuisance. As citizens they had symbolic importance: prestige was on the line, and letting them be treated roughly by a foreign government might set an alarming precedent for the future. And it is true that consular officials who dealt with beachcombers directly often genuinely felt aggrieved on

¹⁰⁹ UKNA FCO 46/195 NA FCO 46/195: Robertson to Parkes. (27 December 1875).

¹¹⁰ Hawks, *Expedition of an American Squadron*, 203.

¹¹¹ Obana Sakusuke, *Ogasawara Yōroku* 1 no.19: 37–9; UKNA FCO 46/195: Robertson to Parkes (23 December 1875).

¹¹² UKNA FCO 46/195: Robertson to Parkes (23 December 1875).

their behalf, especially when they felt authentic ties of ethnic kinship. But beachcombers also had a habit of getting themselves into trouble in remote corners of the world, creating a host of diplomatic headaches in the process. The foreign ministers who reviewed their cases from a distance tended to look on them much more coolly. In some cases gunboats were dispatched to intervene directly, but where possible imperial states preferred to use weaker states as intermediaries, negotiating extraterritorial treaties and setting up systems of consular courts.

When it came to the children of beachcombers, an even simpler solution presented itself: disavow citizenship completely. The erosion of beachcomber sovereignty on the Bonins can be understood not just as the result of assertive Japanese colonial policy, but as a story of imperial abandonment.¹¹³

Borderland Citizens

As newly minted Japanese subjects, the descendants of the original Bonin colonists found themselves in an awkward position, for their status as ‘naturalised foreigners’¹¹⁴ also fell short of full citizenship. They were denied the vote, banned from residing elsewhere in Japan, and were generally regarded with a blend of suspicion, contempt and ethnographic curiosity by their new government.¹¹⁵ Themselves the progeny of settler colonists, they soon found themselves outnumbered in the islands by an influx of new, government-subsidised Hachijōjiman settlers. Those Hachijōjimans also, it should be said, enjoyed only a qualified form of citizenship. Though the Meiji government allowed Japanese on the mainland to elect their own local government officials, it did not extend this privilege to the archipelago’s remote islands. Instead, with unmistakable condescension, it dispatched bureaucrats to rule islands such as the Bonin, Izu and Amami Islands directly ‘on account of the environment, the nature of the people, and their old-fashioned customs’.¹¹⁶ In this sense we could even speak of Hachijōjima as an ‘internal colony’ in the same mould as Hokkaidō or Okinawa, and of Hachijōjiman settlers in the Bonins as

¹¹³ See also Yamamoto, ‘Balance of Favour’, 210. ¹¹⁴ *kika gaikokujin*.

¹¹⁵ Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 93.

¹¹⁶ Takaesu Masaya, *Kindai Nihon no chihō tōchi to tōsho* (Yumani Shobō, 2009), 20, 44.

subaltern colonists in the same mould as Koreans, Taiwanese, Scots and Corsicans.¹¹⁷

At the same time, Bonin and Hachijōjima residents enjoyed some privileges denied to their mainland compatriots. Although Port Lloyd was never formally designated an international trade port, in practice the local authorities continued to allow foreign ships to call there. And though the Bonins never regained their status as a whaling hub, they did attract traffic from hunters in pursuit of other oceanic prey. This meant that well into the twentieth century Bonin Islanders found it relatively easy to sign up for stints on Kurile-bound sealing expeditions, at a time when ordinary Japanese had to apply for exit permits to leave the country.¹¹⁸ Like their beachcomber and Hawaiian forbearers, not all returned.

Seals were not the only marine animals that beckoned. Even after the colonisation of the Bonin Islands many other North Pacific islands remained uninhabited, their resources as yet untapped. Bonin and Hachijōjima residents, by dint of their location and oceangoing experience, were ideally positioned to profit from those resources. To do so they did a number of things. They staged elaborate performances to style themselves as pioneers capable of transforming wilderness into permanently habitable space. They leveraged their status as Japanese citizens to lobby their own government for support, in the process drawing new connections between private claims to property and state claims to territory. And they slaughtered untold millions of seabirds.

¹¹⁷ Mason and Lee, *Reading Colonial Japan*, 18–20, Barbara Brooks, ‘Peopling the Japanese Empire: The Koreans in Manchuria and the Rhetoric of Inclusion’, in *Japan’s Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930*, ed. Sharon Minichiello (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998); Seiji Shirane, *Gateway Imperialism: Colonial Taiwan and Japanese Expansion in South China and Southeast Asia, 1895–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 127–30; Robert Aldrich, ‘France’s Colonial Island: Corsica and the Empire’, *French History and Civilization* (August 2017): 112–25.

¹¹⁸ Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara-tō*, 287; H. J. Snow, *In Forbidden Seas: Recollections of Sea Otter-Hunting in the Kurils* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912) 151–3. For the history of Japanese passports see Kamishiraishi Minoru, ‘Meiji Ishin ki ryoken seido no kisoteki kenkyū’, *Shien* 73 no. 1 (2013); Takahiro Yamamoto, ‘Japan’s Passport System and the Opening of Borders, 1866–1878’, *Historical Journal* 60 no. 4 (2017): 997–1021.