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Japanese Wives in Fiction and Real Life

ONE OF THE first vessels to visit the Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard after it was leased to the company by the Japanese Government was the French man-of-war *Triomphante*, which arrived here on 8 July 1885 and underwent repairs at the dock for a period of about one month.¹

Upon arrival, the 4,176-tonne frigate was by far the largest ship in the harbour. The runners-up were the 2,380-tonne British corvette *Champion* and the 2,300-tonne American frigate *Trenton*, the latter still decked out in banners from its celebration of Independence Day four days earlier. The harbour was scattered with water-going vessels of every size and shape: steamships plying the regular routes linking Japanese, Chinese and Korean ports; Austrian, British and Russian gunboats flying flags of the respective countries; transports, tugs, coal barges, lighters and junks in various states of repair; and hundreds of single-oar sampans ferrying passengers back and forth from the landing steps in front of the custom jetties.

The city of Nagasaki stretched back from the waterfront, to the south the brick and stone buildings of the foreign settlement and

the houses of wealthy foreign residents hidden among trees on the hillsides, and to the north at the head of the bay, the artificial delta of Nakashima River and a low grid-work of wooden buildings stretching up to a row of Buddhist temples skirting the hillsides. Although the *chonmage* topknots and samurai swords of old were gone, most of the Japanese people walking in the streets wore traditional dress, lived in houses that dated back to the days before the opening of the port, cooked food with firewood in earthen kitchen *kamado* stoves, illuminated rooms with vegetable oil lamps, and enjoyed the same familiar Nagasaki diet of Japanese cuisine spiced with Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch influences. There were no telephone poles, no modern vehicles (other than rickshaws with bicycle wheels), no significant military presence, and still very few artifacts of glass or steel or concrete to mar the historic townscape. In short, aside from the foreign settlement and its Western-style buildings in the southern suburb, the lifestyles of the citizens of Nagasaki and the physical appearance of their city remained remarkably unchanged since the sunset years of the Edo Period.

Among the officers standing on the bridge of the *Triomphante* was a thirty-five year-old lieutenant named Julien Marie Viaud, a native of the seaside town of Rochefort southwest of Paris better known by his pen name 'Pierre Loti'. By the time of his visit to Nagasaki, Loti had already published several autobiographical travelogue-novels, such as *Aziyadé*, about a romantic exploit in Turkey, and *Le Mariage de Loti*, a story based on a stay in Tahiti. As the two names indicate, the Frenchman was leading parallel lives as a navy lieutenant serving his country on the world's oceans and an author enjoying acclaim for his keen powers of observation, his gift for poetic turn of phrase, and his talent for smuggling himself into the bosom of exotic faraway lands. When the *Triomphante* dropped anchor in Nagasaki Harbour, he was already gathering material for a book entitled *Madame Chrysanthème* that would soar to the top of bestseller lists after publication in Paris two years later, make Nagasaki famous, and set the stage for Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*.²

In the book, Loti notes with disdain the harbour laden with nondescript foreign ships and laments that, 'Someday, when man shall have made all things alike, the earth will be a dull, tedious dwelling-place, and we shall have even to give up travelling and seeking for a change which shall no longer be found.' Then he

mentions the foreign settlement in passing and reveals his plan for the Nagasaki visit:

Consular residences, custom-house offices, manufactories; a dry dock in which a Russian frigate was lying; on the heights the large European concession, sprinkled with villas, and on the quays, American bars for the sailors. Further off, it is true, further off, far away behind these common-place objects, in the very depths of the immense green valley, peered thousands upon thousands of tiny black houses, a tangled mass of curious appearance, from which here and there emerged some higher, dark red, painted roofs, probably the true old Japanese Nagasaki which still exists. And in those quarters, who knows, there may be, lurking behind a paper screen, some affected cat's-eyed little woman, whom perhaps in two or three days (having no time to lose) I shall marry!!

Loti had heard about Nagasaki's unique system of prostitution and the custom of 'Japanese marriage' from other navy officers, and he lost no time in engaging a rickshaw driver to carry him to an establishment called the 'Garden-of-Flowers' where he thought he could make the necessary arrangements. About this place he says:

Many of my friends had, on their return home from that country, told me about it, and I knew a great deal; the Garden of Flowers is a tea-house, an elegant rendezvous. There, I would inquire for a certain Kangourou-San, who is at the same time interpreter, washerman, and confidential agent for the intercourse of races.

Although Loti uses it as a man's name, Kangourou ('Kangoro', sometimes corrupted as 'Kangaroo') was actually a generic appellation used by foreigners to refer to the Japanese pimps who made arrangements for liaisons with Japanese women and whose role in the 'intercourse of races' harked back to the days of the Dutch sojourn on Dejima. The word itself was relatively new, being derived from 'Gankiro', the name of a brothel catering to foreigners in the Yokohama entertainment quarter.

After meeting Loti at the Garden-of-Flowers, Kangourou agrees to introduce him to a 'very pretty girl of about fifteen' named Jasmine, who is living with her parents in the neighbourhood of Diou-djen-dji (Jūzenji) and who can be engaged 'for about eighteen or twenty dollars a month, on condition of presenting her with a few dresses of the best fashion, and of lodging her in a pleasant and well-situated house, – all of which a man of gallantry like myself could not fail to do'. Jūzenji, named

after a defunct Buddhist temple, was originally a stretch of wooded hillside, its most significant landmark being the horse-path leading out of Nagasaki towards Fukahori and other villages on the Nagasaki Peninsula. After the opening of Nagasaki as a treaty port in 1859, the area had undergone rapid urbanization because of its location between the Japanese town and former Chinese Quarter on one side and the foreign settlement and international waterfront on the other. By the time of Loti's visit it had developed into a densely populated mosaic of wooden houses, shrines and workingman's taverns pressing together across tiny walled-in gardens and narrow flagstone lanes and stairways.

Three days later, Loti has rented a house in the Jūzenji neighbourhood near the foreign settlement and is waiting there for the arrival of Kangourou and Jasmine. Watching from a second-floor veranda, he describes in detail how the girl ascends the path with a number of other people and how she receives final touches to her kimono and hair outside: 'Her dress is of pearl-grey silk, her *obi* (sash) of mauve satin; a sprig of silver flowers quivers in her hair; a parting ray of sunlight touches the little figure; five or six persons accompany her. Yes! It is undoubtedly Mdlle. Jasmine; they are bringing me my *fiancée*!' This scene of the wife-prostitute and her entourage arriving at the foreign patron's house is repeated *verbatim* in the first act of the opera *Madame Butterfly*.

Arrogance and mockery ooze from the French author's account of his embarrassment at engaging in ritual bows with Jasmin's companions when they enter the house and, after seeing the girl up close, his efforts to explain to Kangourou that he does not want her because she is too young. Seeing the disappointment of the accompanying women, whom he assumes are Jasmin's mother and aunts, Loti says:

I feel really almost sorry for them; the fact is, that for women who, not to put too fine a point on it, have come to sell a child, they have an air I was not prepared for: I can hardly say an air of *respectability* (a word in use with us, which is absolutely without meaning in Japan), but an air of unconscious and good-natured simplicity; they are accomplishing an act perfectly admissible in their world, and really it all resembles, more than I could have thought possible, a bonafide marriage.

In the midst of the confusion, Loti notices another girl sitting in the background and asks Kangourou who she might be,

whereupon the pimp introduces her as ‘Mdlle. Chrysanthème’ and makes her stand up for the Frenchman’s perusal, assuring him that, although she is attending merely as a spectator, she is just as available as the other girl because ‘she is not married’. After a discussion with the girl’s parents, Kangourou tells Loti that they will agree to ‘give her up for twenty dollars a month, the same price as Mdlle. Jasmine’.

Loti devotes the rest of the book to a description of his ‘married life’ with Chrysanthème in the house at Jūzenji and his experiences in Nagasaki, everything from excursions to markets, shrines and teahouses to funeral processions, mosquito nets, outdoor bath tubs, and the drone of cicadas reverberating in the summer air. Readers turn the pages relishing the portrait of an exotic faraway place but still hope for some expression of affection or erotic attraction between the French lieutenant and his Japanese consort. In the end, however, their expectations are rewarded only with mockery, chauvinism and indifference. Not surprisingly, the French author loses interest in his ‘mousmé’³ and tires of the game of play-house in Nagasaki. His last words to Chrysanthème before boarding the *Triomphante* and steaming out of Nagasaki Harbour are:

Well little mousmé, let us part good friends; one last kiss even, if you like. I took you to amuse me; you have not perhaps succeeded very well, but after all you have done what you could: given me your little face, your little curtseys, your little music; in short, you have been pleasant enough in your Japanese way. And who knows, perchance I may yet think of you sometimes when I recall this glorious summer, these pretty quaint gardens, and the ceaseless concert of the cicadas.

Loti says that his encounter with a prostitute in Nagasaki ‘resembled’ marriage, and all he is doing when he refers to his ‘married life’ and uses the honorific prefix ‘madame’ reserved for married women is lampooning Nagasaki’s unique system of prostitution. Some readers however failed to get the joke, and the misinterpretation surfaced in a number of other books until finding its ultimate expression in the opera *Madame Butterfly*. World traveller Katherine S. Baxter, for example, mentions Loti as follows in her description of the scenery of Nagasaki after a visit here in the early 1890s: ‘Madame Chrysanthème and the cottage where she resided with her French husband were not *en evidence*; but Pierre Loti’s charming sketch made the whole environment

seem strangely familiar.⁴ Note that she uses the word ‘husband’ without any hint of irony. In another book published in the wake of *Madame Chrysanthème*, British writer Albert Tracy informs readers, straight-faced, that the temporary relationships between foreign men and Japanese women are legal unions in the eyes of Japanese law:

Every foreigner engaged in commercial pursuits is expected, if he has no family at home, to take a Japanese wife. I say ‘wife’ because, as in the State of New York, no religious ceremony is necessary to make the relation quite legal, according to Japanese law. But supposing the merchant retires from business? Then he ‘divorces’ his wife; provides for her future, and that of her children, if she has any; and sails away to European respectability. Sometimes he departs without making any provision for his offspring, and leaving the mother to poverty.⁵

Many cases of abandonment undoubtedly occurred, but they were immoral if not illegal from any point of view. Most of the sad tales of heartbreak in old Nagasaki are lost in the dark waters of unrecorded history, but one is alluded to in the English-language newspapers of the foreign settlement. In 1876, nine years before Loti’s visit, *The Rising Sun and Nagasaki Express* reported that W.L. Malcolmson, a former Scottish resident of this port, had given a course of lectures in Aberdeen on ‘The Commercial Morality of Japan’. The tone of the article is rather caustic, suggesting that the writer and his readers shared some other less flattering knowledge about Malcolmson. This is clarified by a short article in the next issue of the newspaper, in which the editor takes his gloves off and writes:

A prominent statesman once said that in this world cheek is everything. Could imagination depict anything more barefaced or smelling more savourily of genuine audacity than W.L. Malcolmson, late of Japan, lecturing before an Aberdeen Young Men’s Christian Association. The Eastern career of this moralizing lecturer was that of an unscrupulous adventurer, deliberately deceiving his best friends and stealthily fleeing this country with innumerable unpaid debts. It is but justice that our Aberdeen friends should know these facts, and we would suggest that the proceeds of the lectures should be remitted to Nagasaki for the support of his forsaken Japanese wife and children.⁶

Just as the great distance between Japan and Scotland allowed Malcolmson to make a clean break, most readers of *Madame*

Chrysanthème were willing to suspend moral judgement because of the enormous geographical and cultural gap separating Europe and Japan at the time. However, the downside of the great popularity of *Madame Chrysanthème* – it shot to the top of best-seller lists and appeared in dozens of editions in various languages – is the fact that the scenes of Nagasaki in 1885 became lodged in the Western consciousness like images captured in photographs, forever unchanging despite the evolution of the subject in real life, and that Pierre Loti's blanket condemnation of Japanese modernization and belittling of Japanese people continued to inform European attitudes in later decades, even when Japan reached a level of industrial and military strength that rivalled that of Britain, Russia and Loti's own France.

The image of Japanese women created by Pierre Loti, not to mention the sad example set by the likes of W.L. Malcolmson, was also a nuisance to responsible foreign residents of Japan who shared relationships of commitment with Japanese women. As Loti's story indicates, illicit relationships between Japanese women and foreign men were still common in the 1880s, but bona fide international marriages had increased significantly since receiving government approval in March 1873, and families with one foreign and one Japanese parent were anything but rare in Nagasaki and the other treaty ports. In its 17 May 1873 issue, *The Nagasaki Express* announced the impending marriage of a Chinese resident of Nagasaki and a Japanese woman named Omio (actually Mio, the 'O' being an honorific):

A Cantonese Celestial, named Sewnang, who is connected with Messrs Ceaupseng & Co, General Store-Keepers in the settlement, has applied to the native authorities at this port for permission to enter into a matrimonial alliance with a Japanese young lady, named Omio, who belongs to Saga. No reply will be given until the Saga authorities have been communicated with, but it is expected that permission will be granted to enable this interesting event to take place.

The marriage of Sewnang and Omio was 'interesting' in that it came only a few weeks after the government sanction of international marriage and therefore signified one of the first legal marital unions formed by a Japanese person and a foreigner. Over the following months and years the newspapers of Nagasaki announced many other international marriages. When Norwegian resident Hans Petersen married a Japanese woman named Inosuki

Matsu of Amakusa, Kumamoto Prefecture, in January 1874, the newspapers informed readers that the ceremony had been conducted by Henry Stout, Nagasaki's leading missionary of the Reformed Church in America, evidence enough that a majority of residents blessed the marriage and viewed it as 'legal'.⁷

Whether officially married or not, a large number of mixed race couples lived in Nagasaki over the years and engaged in permanent relationships, playing a vital if inconspicuous role in the social affairs of the foreign settlement and in interaction between the foreign and Japanese communities. One was Briton Simeon F. Lawrence and his Japanese wife Yoshi. Lawrence came to Japan in the early 1860s as a British army sergeant and, after discharge, was engaged as constable at the British consulate in Hakodate, a position that he held for thirteen years. He came to Nagasaki in 1879, accompanied by Yoshi whom he had met and married in Hakodate, to assume the same position at the British Consulate in this port. He served here continuously until retiring in 1898, winning such respect that the consul at the time showered him with praise in a letter to the British Minister and recommended a generous pension. He died of heart disease in 1902; his widow, who survived him by ten years, lived alone in the family house in the former Nagasaki Foreign Settlement. Simeon and Yoshi are buried together under a single gravestone at Sakamoto International Cemetery.⁸ This cemetery, which served the foreign community of Nagasaki from 1888 to the post-war period, is today scattered with headstones marking the graves of former foreign residents who married Japanese women and lived here for as long as forty or fifty years. One belongs to Marcel Giroit, a French resident who died in Nagasaki in 1963 at the age of seventy-three, and his Japanese wife Kuni, who erected the gravestone for her husband and was buried here with him when she died in 1979 at the age of eighty-one. While the epitaphs on most of the headstones feature short poems or religious platitudes, the one that Kuni built for her husband is inscribed with a touchingly personal message in French: *Je suis là avec vous. Je vous aime.* ('I am here with you. I love you'.)

The 'Register of Foreign Marriages' kept by the Nagasaki British Consulate from 1922 to 1940 is another reliable document shedding light on some of the international marriages formalized in Nagasaki.⁹ This shows a total of sixteen marriages, five of which were consummated by a British man and a Japanese

woman. Not a single marriage between a Japanese man and British woman is recorded, a disparity that, although due in part to the difference between the Japanese and British systems of registration, reflects the preponderance of liaisons between foreign men and Japanese women.

Still further information about bonafide international marriages concluded in Nagasaki can be found in *Naigaijin kyokon jinmeibo* ('List of Names of Japanese and Foreigners Permitted to Marry'), a register kept by the Foreign Affairs Division, Nagasaki Prefecture from September 1873 to March 1898, that is, most of the interval between the government sanction and the abolition of the foreign settlements as official entities.¹⁰ The first of the forty-eight marriages entered in this register is that of Tan Ben Tek, a British subject hailing from Singapore who married a Japanese woman named Isobe Wai on 30 September 1873. Another is that of Wilson Walker's younger brother Robert N. Walker and a Japanese woman named Fukuda Sato.

After obtaining his captain's licence from the Japanese government in 1876, Robert N. Walker served as commander of the *Heian-maru* and assisted in the government effort to quash the Satsuma Rebellion. In 1878, he fathered a daughter, named Annie, and began a new life, balancing the duties of steamship captain and the responsibilities of a family man. The mother was a twenty-year-old Japanese woman named Fukuda Sato. Three more children followed, a second daughter named Margaret and two sons, John and Robert Jr., all born in the Kobe Foreign Settlement where the family resided. According to the *Naigaijin kyokon jinmeibo*, Sato was the eldest daughter of Fukuda Moheiji of Shinagawa. Nothing is known about Fukuda Moheiji's occupation or the nature of his daughter's first encounter with Robert N. Walker, but the fact that Shinagawa, the first post town west of Tokyo on the old Tokaido Highway and the city's principal ocean harbour, served as a port for the despatch of government troops and ships to the Kyushu battlefields during the Satsuma Rebellion suggests that the family was involved in some way with the accommodation or entertainment of the Mitsubishi steamship crews.

In 1881, Robert was appointed to command the Mitsubishi Mail Steamship Co.'s *Hyōgo-maru*, a 1,500-tonne steamer serving the regular routes between Japan and Korea. In March 1886, he received orders to take over the *Takachiho-maru*, a British-built

iron screw steamer slated for use on the newly established Nagasaki – Vladivostok line. At this juncture, Robert, Sato and their four children moved to Nagasaki from Kobe and took up residence in the brick bungalow at No. 31 Minamiyamate, a lot high on the hillside at the southern end of the foreign settlement commanding a panoramic view of the harbour. The information in the *Naigaijin kyokon jinmeibo* indicates that Robert and Sato registered the marriage soon after their arrival in Nagasaki, or eight years after the birth of their first child. The reason for the delay is unclear, but it is likely that the couple wanted to dodge prejudice in the foreign settlement and to ensure that their children were welcomed into the community on an equal footing with their British peers.

Nagasaki was now a regular port-of-call for steamships and men-of-war plying the maritime routes between Japan and the continent, and the foreign settlement was firmly ensconced in its role as a gateway and clearing house, with a score of foreign-run agencies issuing tickets, arranging for the landing and loading of cargo, and mobilizing hundreds of Japanese companies to handle various aspects of the work. Over the next few years Robert N. Walker established a reputation as a competent captain and leading member of the foreign community in Nagasaki. While guiding the *Takachiho-maru* on the regular run from Nagasaki to Pusan, Korea, once a week – and on to Vladivostok in April when the ice in that harbour broke – he served as a member of the Nagasaki Club and the English Church Committee and participated in all the social events on the Nagasaki calendar. Sato gave birth to three more daughters, named Kitty, Maude and Violet, bringing the total to seven. Walker was at the height of his career, but it was a height from which he would soon tumble, suddenly and irrevocably.

On the evening of 10 May 1891, the *Takachiho-maru* left Nagasaki on its regular voyage to Vladivostok. As usual, Captain Walker took a bearing near Takashima and set the course and speed in such a way as to pass the southwest shore of Tsushima around daybreak. Tsushima is a cluster of islands lying like a wave breaker between Japan and Korea. The subsequent events are reported in detail in *The Rising Sun and Nagasaki Express* and other newspapers of the time. Walker left the wheel in charge of the third officer and retired to his cabin with orders to be awakened at 4.30 a.m. While he slept, a blanket of clouds drifted

across the night sky and fog began to roll in over the ocean and to reduce visibility. The third officer went to the captain's cabin around 2.00 a.m. to tell him about the change in the weather. Walker told him to maintain the same course and, again, to awaken him at 4.30.

Captain Walker was still in his cabin at 5.30 when the black hull of the *Takachiho-maru* hit a reef at Tsutsuzaki, a jagged finger of rock at the southwestern tip of the island. The damage was slight enough to allow the passengers to gather their things together in good order and to board the lifeboats and the fishing boats that had come out to the scene of the accident. The mail bags, money and most of the cargo were also rescued before the ship settled onto a bed of rocks.

After ensuring that his passengers and the mail and money had been safely conveyed to Nagasaki on another NYK ship, Walker spent day after day working with teams of labourers in the attempt to float the ship, but the rainy season soon set in, and gales and heavy rain dashed his hopes. In late July he left the scene and proceeded directly to Tokyo to be present at the court of inquiry to be held there to determine the causes of the accident. NYK posted an advertisement in newspapers inviting offers for the purchase of the *Takachiho-maru* 'as she now lies stranded at Tsushima'.¹¹

At the court of inquiry held in two sessions in August 1891, Captain Walker, Chief Officer Howard and some of the crew members recalled the events leading up to the grounding of the ship. One source of contention was the question of whether or not Howard – who had joined the *Takachiho-maru* crew on the previous voyage and taken over for the third officer on the night of the accident – had awakened the captain properly at the instructed hour of 4.30 a.m. The court decision, announced at the Marine Bureau of the Communications Department on 17 August 1891, declared the chief officer responsible for the accident and gave him a three-month suspension, but it also found Captain Walker guilty of neglect of duty as commander of the ill-fated vessel and suspended his licence for six months. By this time the pounding surf and churning currents off the coast of Tsushima had eliminated all hopes to re-float the ship. Just before the accident faded from the focus of public interest, the editor of *The Japan Weekly Mail* in Yokohama issued a final word on the subject:

The Chief Officer's ideas of duty were utterly defective indeed, and to him belongs the greater blame. But, on the other hand, was it not the Captain's business to appraise the men under his command and to modify his orders accordingly; and further, did not the difficulty of awakening him indicate a mood of security almost amounting to carelessness? A Marine Court is unfortunately bound to err on the side of severity: its findings affect the safety of lives and property. The victims of this necessity are to be sincerely pitied, especially when they are men of such a record and so universally esteemed and liked as is the late Master of the *Takachiho Maru*.¹²

The anguish experienced by Captain Walker and his family as a result of the court decision is indicated by the fact that Sato packed up all the family belongings and, with her seven children and a maid in tow, left Nagasaki for Yokohama only one week after the announcement. It is also indicated by the advertisement published a few days later in the Nagasaki newspapers putting the house at No. 31 Minamiyamate up for sale.¹³

Walker's reaction seems somewhat exaggerated in retrospect. There is no evidence to show that NYK fired or even penalized him for the accident, and as it turned out he stayed in Yokohama well beyond the six-month duration of the suspension and presumably could have returned to his former post if he had chosen to do so. On 20 October 1892, Robert, Sato and their eight children – their third son Wilson had been born in Yokohama the previous year – boarded the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) steamship *Empress of Japan* leaving Yokohama for Vancouver.¹⁴ From Vancouver, the family apparently took the recently completed transcontinental railway and reached England by Christmas. Robert was seeing Maryport and reuniting with his father for the first time in eighteen years, and he undoubtedly relished the moment as a glorious homecoming after all his adventures at sea, his promotion to master mariner and involvement in the development of Japanese shipping, and his success as both a family man and a gentleman of secure financial standing. William Walker probably greeted his son with open arms and welcomed Sato and her children into the clan, hailing a new era of family prosperity.

Robert's father and brother were operating a ship chandler's business and commission agency on the Maryport waterfront and would soon purchase the shipbuilding yard of Ritson & Sons, the largest in the port. Robert may have joined them in this

enterprise, but he does not seem to have realized the bright hopes that had illuminated his homecoming. He and his wife Sato and eight children took up lodgings in a small house on High Street squeezed in a row of stucco buildings, with one tiny window in the rear looking over the roof of a pub aptly called ‘Sailor’s Return’. This was quite a contrast to the spacious tree-shaded home in Nagasaki with its team of servants and panoramic view of the harbour and surrounding mountains.

Sato barely had time to adjust to her new environment when she became pregnant with her ninth and last child, a girl named Gladys who was born in the High Street house in December 1893. Sato fell ill the following spring and died in the arms of her husband and children on 22 May 1894, still only thirty-six years old. Her obituary in the local newspaper says simply: ‘[Died] At 98 High Street, Maryport, on May 22nd, 1894, Sato Walker, beloved wife of Capt. R.N. Walker (late of Nippon Yusen Kaisha), aged 36 years.’¹⁵ Although the only other source of information about this tragic event is the death certificate preserved in Maryport city archives – a document that attributes the young mother’s demise to ‘heart disease and general dropsy’ – Sato’s condition was undoubtedly aggravated by the trauma of being pulled out of her happy life in Nagasaki, by the exertion and anxiety of a journey half-way round the world, by the inability to comfort her husband in his disappointment and resentment, and by the difficulty of raising nine children of mixed parentage in a northern English town where few if any Japanese people had ever set foot before.

Today, Maryport has fallen into quiet anonymity, its harbour frequented mostly by pleasure craft and its once bustling shipyards gone, but the ‘Sailor’s Return’ pub continues its lonesome wait at the waterfront for the town’s long-lost sons. The house on High Street is also intact, its drab appearance and tiny proportions speaking silently of the sunken spirits of a grounded mariner and the dilemma of a large family torn between two cultures. Sato’s red granite gravestone, remarkably new-looking despite the passage of a century, is intact in Maryport Cemetery, overlooking the windswept grayness of the Irish Sea. Robert N. Walker may have been standing here when, shortly after the death of his wife, he resolved to return to Japan and to seek new opportunities in her homeland.

In contrast to the turbulence experienced by his brother, Wilson Walker enjoyed mostly smooth sailing, rising to ever

greater distinctions as the superintending captain of the Mitsubishi Mail Steamship Co. and a key adviser in the company's efforts to dominate the shipping lines connecting Japan with the continent. In 1880, he married Charlotte Noordhoek Hegt, the Dutch-born daughter of a prominent Yokohama entrepreneur named J.B. Noordhoek Hegt, and took up residence in the Yokohama Foreign Settlement. Just when the Mitsubishi Mail Steamship Co. was transforming into Nippon Yūsen Kaisha (NYK) in 1885, he also participated as leading stockholder in the formation of the Japan Brewery Company, a project in which his friends Thomas Glover and Mitsubishi president Iwasaki Yanosuke were intimately involved.¹⁶

Wilson Walker's last major task before retiring from NYK was to travel to Scotland to take charge of a new ship called the *Saikyō-maru* constructed by the London & Glasgow Engineering & Iron Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. on the River Clyde. NYK had ordered this ship and its sister vessel the *Kobe-maru* soon after the formation of the company as part of plans to expand the corporate fleet. With a gross tonnage of nearly 3,000 tonnes and luxurious facilities for 341 passengers, it was a state-of-the-art product of the British shipbuilding industry and the finest vessel ever to join the ranks of Japanese merchantmen. It was probably also the first European-built ship to boast cross-cultural amenities like separate Western-style and Japanese-style washrooms.¹⁷ Walker sailed the *Saikyō-maru* back to Japan, following the same route as the one he had taken in the *Niigata-maru* a decade earlier. He arrived in Nagasaki on 8 August 1888 and within a few weeks was commanding the new ship on the Yokohama - Shanghai line. The summer of the following year marked a dramatic change for the Walker family. Wilson submitted his resignation to NYK after accepting an offer from the Japan Brewery Company to serve as the company's full-time secretary. The *Saikyō-maru* made the last voyage under his command in July 1889, and before the trees on the Yokohama hillsides had turned red he had hung up his captain's binoculars and settled into a new life as a company administrator.

The Japan Brewery Company constructed a grand red-brick building in Yokohama and imported a set of brewing tanks from Germany. The new facilities reached completion soon after Wilson Walker's appointment as secretary, and the company product, 'Kirin Beer', caught the Japanese imagination so

powerfully that the brewers had to work on twenty-four-hour shifts to keep up with the demand. Despite the company's great success, however, Wilson submitted his resignation in March 1893. His wife Charlotte explains the circumstances as follows in a memoir written late in life:

When the children reached an age for school, we decided to go to England ... We booked passages aboard the Canadian Pacific Mail Liner 'Empress of Japan' en route to Shanghai on her maiden voyage. At that time a financial crisis was affecting the whole world. Banks went smash, and through the failure of the O.B.C. and Bank of China, where we had our money, we were almost penniless. The trip to England was cancelled and we started all over again ... My husband was fortunate in passing his examinations and securing the post of Inland Sea Pilot through the kindness of Baron Iwasaki Yanoski [*sic*], the Head of the Mitsu Bishi S.S.C. for whom my husband worked for many years. Later we had to move to Kobe and I was absolutely heartbroken, leaving dear old Yokohama, my family and numerous friends. Ill luck followed us there. We lived in a house where three deaths of typhoid pneumonia had been recorded. After a few weeks three of my children were taken ill of the same complaint ... Things were in a fearful state. I lost my baby-boy Willie at the age of 2 years and 2 months ... from the disease. One of my twins, Lily, was at death's door ... After the recovery of my children, we all went to Nagasaki for a change. I liked it so much better there that I persuaded my husband to move over entirely.¹⁸

The passenger lists printed in the English-language newspapers of the time corroborate Charlotte's account, showing that Wilson Walker began to commute between Kobe and Nagasaki in the spring of 1893. He worked on a freelance basis for NYK and foreign shipping companies like CPR and the Occidental & Oriental Steamship Co., meeting their large ocean going vessels at Nagasaki and piloting them to Kobe. The role of pilot was an important one in the Seto Inland Sea, a protected but treacherous stretch of saltwater created by some prehistoric convulsion of the earth that tore Shikoku Island off the coast of Honshu and left thousands of islands, hidden rocks and jutting capes in the aftermath. Great advances had been made in the Japanese shipping industry and NYK was quickly earning a global reputation, but the waters in and around Japan's international ports were still supervised by foreign captains and most of the rudders on ocean-going ships guided by foreign hands.

Wilson Walker acquiesced to his wife's entreaties and settled in Nagasaki. The family of seven arrived here in late November 1893 and took up residence at No. 12 Minamiyamate, a large two-storey house with lawns enclosed by brick walls, fireplaces in each room, bay windows and a wide second-floor veranda that provided a panoramic view over Nagasaki Harbour. The house faced a flagstone-paved incline leading from the Bund up to the gate of Ōura Catholic Church and beyond it the stairs to the posh residences on the Minamiyamate hillside. Nestled in a grove of trees directly across the path from the house was the Belle Vue Hotel, the hostelry of choice for foreign visitors arriving on the Bund.

In the summer of 1894, Nagasaki enjoyed a sudden boost when Japan's first major international war filled the harbour with steamships and men-of-war and catapulted the city into an unprecedented period of growth. The Meiji Government had succeeded in concluding a treaty with the reclusive kingdom of Korea in 1876 and opening the port of Pusan for trade. This broke Korea's shell of isolation, but it put Japan on a collision course with China because the latter continued to look at Korea as a vassal state. The catalyst for direct armed conflict came in the form of a peasant uprising by the Tonghak cult, a conservative religious group trying to prevent the influence of Christianity in Korea. When the uprising exploded into a massive rebellion in early 1894, the Korean king turned to China for military assistance. Japan also sent troops, but the main purpose was not to disarm the Tonghaks – a task already accomplished by the time the Japanese soldiers arrived – but to drive the Chinese out of Korea and to finally resolve the question of Korea's international alignment.

Just before the official declaration of war, Wilson and Charlotte Walker received the news that Wilson's sister, Ann, the wife of former NYK employee W.H. Talbot, was dying of tuberculosis in Shanghai. Charlotte left Nagasaki with her children and reached her sister-in-law's bedside in time to bid her farewell, but the family had little time to mourn because the conflict between Japan and China was mounting and rumours of warfare and the suspension of steamship service were darting around Shanghai. Charlotte beat a hasty retreat to Nagasaki with her five children and five nieces and nephews on a NYK steamship. She describes the withdrawal from Shanghai in her memoir:

I right away booked passage to return to Nagasaki. I was fortunate to secure room in the only Japanese steamer leaving. With my brother-in-law's help, I managed to take his 5 children as well as my own 5 aboard just in time before she sailed. It was a dreadful trip. Every port-hole was closed and covered with tin as they expected heavy firing from Woosung and nobody was allowed on deck. One shot just missed the bow, a second brought down a piece of the top mast and a third made a hole in the funnel. We arrived at Nagasaki at 2 a.m. With my large family we filled two sampans.

After the declaration of war, the Japanese forces won one decisive battle after another, quickly routing the Chinese on land at Pyongyang and seizing the strategically important town of Port Arthur (Lushun) at the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula. Japan's British-trained naval forces and British-built warships, tested for the first time in mortal combat, also proved far superior to those of the Chinese at the battle of the Yalu River in September 1894 and other encounters at sea. Just as its predecessor the Mitsubishi Mail Steamship Co. had provided ships for the Taiwan Expedition, NYK suspended most of its business activities during the Sino-Japanese War, donated steamships for the war effort and paid bonuses to the captains steaming into the war zone.

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War had a devastating effect on the Chinese community of Nagasaki and its relationship of cooperation with its Japanese neighbours dating back to the earliest days of the port. The doors and windows of Chinese businesses were boarded up, the traffic in ships between the two countries came to a halt, officials at the Chinese Consulate at No. 2 Ōura lowered the national flag, and Chinese families paid final respects to their ancestral graves at Sōfukuji, Kōfukuji and the other Chinese temples in Nagasaki. On 23 July 1894, a fire broke out in the Shinchi neighbourhood and destroyed twenty-three houses. Another fire broke out in nearby Hirobaba on 29 July, reducing twelve houses to ashes. The cause was arson; the criminal a Chinese resident who had attempted to steal valuables and gather funds for his voyage home.¹⁹ The number of Chinese residents, which totaled 610 in December 1893, had plummeted to 283 by the time of the next count a year later.²⁰ On the Japanese side, groups of right-wing youths roamed the city calling for a boycott on Chinese goods and other sanctions, while the

governor of Nagasaki imposed restrictions on travel and ordered the registration of all Chinese people remaining in the city, creating the first prototype of Japan's modern-day Alien Registration system.²¹

On 17 April 1895, Japan and China signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki, bringing the war to an end and alerting the world to Japan's success in the project of modernization and industrialization. The terms of the treaty included China's recognition of Korean independence, cession of Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands to Japan, and the agreement to permit Japanese companies to operate ships on the Yangtze River and establish manufacturing facilities in Shanghai and other treaty ports. These new advantages brought Japan headlong into the commercial and political maelstrom of East Asia and ensured a sharp boost in Nagasaki's fortunes as the closest port to the continent. It also made China ever more vulnerable to colonial advances, again involving Nagasaki as a strategic port in the region. In March 1897, seven Russian warships anchored in Nagasaki for rest and replenishment, marking the beginning of regular visits of the Russian East Asian Fleet.²² The Spanish-American War and the forced cession of Philippines to the United States after Commodore George Dewey defeated the Spanish squadron at Manila Bay in 1898 also resulted in an increase in maritime traffic to Nagasaki. In December the following year, Major John M. Hyde and Lieutenant Elwood G. Babbitt arrived in Nagasaki from Manila and established an army depot to provide food and supplies to American forces, pay salaries, and arrange for the coaling and provision of American ships visiting the port.²³

An article reprinted from *The Far East* (the English-language edition of the Tokyo newspaper *Kokumin-no-tomo*) in *The Rising Sun and Nagasaki Express* in April 1896 articulates the optimism beginning to bloom in this port and the anticipations of the rest of the country. Entitled 'Nagasaki, A Rift in the Cloud', the article is attributed to a Japanese writer going by the penname 'Sachi' but may have been the work of Tokutomi Sohō, the influential editor of *Kokumin-no-tomo* and a native of Kyushu. The article departs from the previous style of English-language newspapers in the foreign settlements in that it expresses a Japanese opinion and calls attention to historical facts of which most foreign readers were probably unaware. The author begins with a long account of the history of the city, pointing out that

Nagasaki, the beautiful seaport on the western coast of Kiushu [*sic*] has witnessed many important matters which have been of great benefit to the country. For a period of 300 years, when Japan was otherwise closed to the whole world, Nagasaki, like the air tube which furnishes air to the diver far down in the deep, was the sole opening through which knowledge of the outside world found its way into the country ... Thus Nagasaki was in many ways the birthplace of the modern civilization of Japan. But the greatest service she rendered the country was through the inspiration which she gave to the Restoration of 1868. There were at that time two parties each contending for the supremacy. The one was the conservative party with its stronghold in Kyoto, and the other was the progressive party which arose in Nagasaki and exerted great influence. It was on the wharf at Nagasaki that Ito and Inouye were convinced of the folly of the anti-foreign movement. It was there that Okuma, Goto, Iwasaki and Mutsu became acquainted with the great forces of the world. It was in Nagasaki that Okuma, the best of our foreign ministers, first divined the secret of national intercourse. Hashimoto, the ablest of our physicians, first learned the elements of physiology and pathology here. It was at Nagasaki that Iwasaki, the cleverest of our merchants, had his eyes opened to the advantage of maritime commerce.

The comment that Nagasaki inspired the Meiji Restoration seems to refer to Thomas Glover, William Alt, Wilson Walker and the other British residents of the foreign settlement who provided assistance to the young samurai who gathered here at the end of the Edo Period searching for new paths of progress. The author ends with a message of confidence in Nagasaki's new role in international affairs after the Sino-Japanese War:

Although the medium through which such great blessings were brought into the country, Nagasaki has fared ill since the Restoration. Her services have been forgotten and she has been left to shift for herself. But what her ungrateful people have not given her, she will in all probability gain through the political development of the country. Facing Shanghai and pointing towards Formosa, her hands will soon be full with the large share which will fall to her in the transactions resulting from our new relations with the South and West.²⁴

One of the best vantage points in Nagasaki to observe the comings and goings of the ships frequenting Nagasaki Harbour was Higashiyamate, which like Minamiyamate had developed over the years into an elegant hillside residential district studded

with gracious Western-style houses and tidy lawns and gardens stitched together by flagstone paths and stairs. The oldest building here was the house at No. 12 Higashiyamate built by American merchant and consul John G. Walsh in the early 1860s and later acquired by the Methodist Episcopal Church for use as a missionary residence. This wooden building, which remains to this day as a nationally designated Important Cultural Asset, was erected around the same time as the Glover and Alt houses in Minamiyamate but differs from them in several aspects, particularly the wide American-style veranda. After Walsh Hall & Co. left Nagasaki in 1874, the house was occupied by an unbroken series of American residents and even served as the American Consulate from 1902 to 1921. In 1892, an American missionary named Irvin Correll, who arrived in Nagasaki to assume the position of principal at the Methodist mission school Chinzei Gakuin, took up residence at No. 12 Higashiyamate with his wife Jennie and children.²⁵

Like other high-end Western-style houses in the foreign settlements of Japan, the spacious houses inhabited by missionaries in Nagasaki were served by low-paid Japanese maids and gardeners and protected from the dusty crowds of 'natives' by a wall of economic advantage and by the legal and psychological buffer of extraterritoriality. Most of the students attending the mission schools were the children of either foreign residents or wealthy Japanese, the latter usually motivated more by attraction to the elite image of Western schooling than by interest in Christian teachings. The missionaries made noble efforts to promote egalitarian education and to include women in the educational process, but the assistance extended to Japanese people tended to come on the condition that the recipients subscribe to Western values and acknowledge the inferiority of their own religion and world-view. This ambivalence is illustrated by the oxymoronic title of the newsletter circulated widely in overseas missions by the Methodist Women's Foreign Missionary Society: *The Heathen Woman's Friend*.

The story of the Correll family's stay in Nagasaki would probably not have attracted special attention if not for the fact that Jennie's younger brother, John Luther Long, published a short story entitled 'Madame Butterfly' in the New York literary journal *Century Magazine* in April 1898.²⁶ As the title indicates, the story borrows heavily from Pierre Loti's *Madame*

Chrysanthème. At the beginning of the latter, Loti is standing with Yves on the deck of the *Triomphante* and boasting that he will ‘marry’ as soon as he reaches Japan. Similarly, Long launches into *Madame Butterfly* with a short chapter in which two American navy officers, identified as Pinkerton and Sayre, are discussing the possibility of ‘marriage’ on the deck of their ship as it steams towards Nagasaki. The next thing we know, Lieutenant Pinkerton, with the help of a ‘marriage-broker’ named Goro, has married Cho-Cho-san (Miss Butterfly) and rented a house for her on a hillside overlooking Nagasaki Harbour. This mimics the temporary arrangement that Loti formed with Chrysanthème through the pimp Kangourou, but Long does not provide any information about the events leading up to it, nor does he bat a literary eye when he uses the word ‘marry’: he seems to be saying that Pinkerton and Butterfly were engaged in a legal marriage, or at least a legal marriage in Japanese eyes. As expected, however, the American lieutenant vacates his love nest as soon as his warship leaves Nagasaki, just as surely as Loti sailed away after the repaired *Triomphante* slid out of dry dock at the Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard. Up to this point the plot of *Madame Butterfly* recapitulates that of *Madame Chrysanthème*, albeit without the clear use of irony in describing the ‘marriage’. Only the names have changed in the process: Loti and his friend Yves become Pinkerton and Sayre, the pimp Kangourou is now Goro, the maid Oyouki is Suzuki, and the woman at the centre of the story is converted from a Chrysanthemum into a Butterfly.

Despite the inklings of plagiarism, Long’s story came to the attention of David Belasco, the ‘Bishop of Broadway’, and took on a new life as a stage play in March 1900. This impressed Italian composer Giacomo Puccini so much when he saw it in London that he set about converting it into an opera, the work of musical and dramatic charm that has enjoyed unflagging international popularity since its debut in 1904.²⁷

Madame Chrysanthème ends with Pierre Loti’s departure from Nagasaki, but the greater part of John Luther Long’s story is devoted to Cho-Cho-san’s long wait with her maid Suzuki and son ‘Trouble’ (born after Pinkerton’s departure) for the American lieutenant’s return. The woman with whom Loti associated in Nagasaki could not speak a word of French or English, and Loti makes no attempt to conceal the fact. He refrains from supplying her with any dialogue other than a few one-word utterances in

Japanese, such as *nezumi!* ('mouse!') when she hears a pattering sound above the ceiling boards in the house in Jūzenji. He also admits his failure to surmount the communication barrier, although he attributes this, not to his own lack of study or interest, but to the woman's mental deficiency. John Luther Long, by contrast, had no appreciation for the language barrier because he had never been to Japan himself, let alone spent a month with a courtesan. He portrays Cho-Cho-san as the beautiful daughter of a samurai who had committed ritual suicide, saving his honour but throwing his family into poverty and giving his daughter no choice but to earn a living as a geisha. Unlike sulky, taciturn Chrysanthème, she is a vivacious chatterbox who, after Pinkerton's departure, insists upon speaking only in English and spends day after day dancing around the house in ecstatic expectation of the American's return.

During a visit to the American Consulate, Cho-Cho-san hears from Mr. Sharpless that Pinkerton's ship is expected in Nagasaki 'about the first of September'. Delighted, she returns to her house and prepares for her lover's return, gazing out over Nagasaki Harbour with a telescope. The first of September comes and goes, days pass, and finally, on 17 September, she sees Pinkerton's ship steam into the harbour and, deliriously happy, decorates the house with flowers and sits down at the *shōji* screens with Suzuki and her son, expecting him to come at any minute. But night falls and another day passes without any word from the American lieutenant. A week later, Cho-Cho-san spies him standing on the deck with a blonde-haired woman, but she remains confident that he has merely been delayed by duties and will soon come up the path to the house. She watches in disbelief the following day, however, when his warship leaves Nagasaki Harbour, and she runs to the consul to seek an explanation, unable to contain herself any longer. While she is speaking with him, the blonde woman comes into the room and asks the consul to forward a telegram. She identifies herself as Mrs Pinkerton and then reads out the telegram that she wants sent to her husband:

Just saw the baby and his nurse. Can't we have him at once. He is lovely. Shall see the mother about it to-morrow. Was not at home when I was there to-day. Expect to join you Wednesday next week per *Kioto maru*. May I bring him along? – Adelaide.

After reciting this to the dumbfounded consul, Mrs Pinkerton notices Cho-Cho-san sitting in a chair, calls her a 'pretty

plaything' and asks for a kiss. When this is refused, she laughs and says, 'Ah, well, I don't blame you. They say you don't do that sort of thing – to women, at any rate. I quite forgive our men for falling in love with you.'

At the end of Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*, the French lieutenant pays his consort in silver dollars and bids her farewell, but, finding that he has more time than expected, he returns to the room he had rented for her – only to find her tapping the coins with a wooden mallet to test their quality. In *Madame Butterfly*, by contrast, Cho-Cho-san returns heartbroken to her house and stabs herself in the neck with a short samurai sword. In an apparent fit of Christian conscience, Long does not let her succeed in the mortal sin of suicide but reports that 'the stream [of blood] between her breasts darkened and stopped' and that 'the little maid came in and bound up the wound'. In their later dramatic and operatic versions of *Madame Butterfly*, David Belasco and Giacomo Puccini both rejected this conclusion and had the tragic heroine explicitly kill herself, knowing full well that Long's wishy-washy portrayal would fall flat on stage.

Madame Butterfly ends with the following sentence: 'When Mrs Pinkerton called the next day at the little house on Higashi Hill it was quite empty.' 'Higashi Hill' can only refer to Higashiyamate, the 'East Hillside' of the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement where the Correll family and other missionaries lived in luxurious isolation from the Japanese community.

Although John Luther Long shows sympathy for the tragic heroine of his story, the missionaries in real-life Nagasaki tended to look upon Japanese prostitutes as agents of the devil and the custom of 'Japanese marriage' as the abomination of a pagan culture. Their persistent efforts to cut away the root of the problem, that is, to divert the attention of sailors from alcohol and sex, bore fruit in 1896 – while Irvin and Jennie Correll were still residing in Nagasaki – with the establishment of the 'Christian Endeavor Home for Seamen'.²⁸

When the warship USS *Charleston* anchored here in 1894, a group of sailors who were also members of the Christian Endeavor Society put together the hefty sum of 650 yen as a donation towards the foundation of a seamen's home. One of the crew members expressed his opinion of Nagasaki as follows:

Nagasaki is the first city I have ever visited where I could not find a place to eat and sleep and rest when coming ashore without

having to do so in a saloon, a gambling den, or in a house of ill repute, and that is saying a great deal, for I have spent three years in travelling in foreign lands.²⁹

To augment the donation from the sailors, the Higashiyamate missionaries launched a fund-raising campaign among foreign residents of Nagasaki and other parts of Kyushu. The usefulness of such an institution and the motivation of the people promoting it were called to question by some sceptics, such as the writer of an article in the local English-language newspaper who sarcastically urged the missionaries to use one of their own 'imposing and palatial residences' as a site for the home.³⁰ The project, however, went ahead as planned. A total of 3,000 yen was collected before the end of the year, a building was rented a No. 26 Ōura (in the venue, ironically enough, of a former saloon), and the Christian Endeavor Home for Seamen was inaugurated by a large group of missionaries and other foreign residents.

The opening of the Christian Endeavor Home for Seamen in 1896 symbolized the transformation of the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement from a rough-hewn receptacle for news of civilization and free-wheeling hard-drinking stopover for foreign sailors, into a secure link in the network of international shipping and tourism, a colonial-style refuge embellished with opulent hotel rooms and billiard saloons and offices with overhead fans and English oak desks, and a home-away-from-home for foreigners caught by circumstances in the cleft between East and West in the sunset years of the era of Emperor Meiji and Queen Victoria.