

The Kuroshio Frontier

This big-picture narrative of modern Japan embeds the archipelago's history in its maritime context. Foregrounding the Kuroshio Current in the Pacific, Jonas Rüegg demonstrates how currents, winds, and animals created a dynamic context to economic, intellectual, and geopolitical reinventions of Japan over the past four centuries. He draws up a novel geography of conflicts and competitions in the making of "modern" Japan, one that underlines little known actors, sites, and events which have previously been treated as peripheral. This book offers a framework that transcends conventional spatial and temporal categorizations of early modern and modern, shogunal and imperial, insular and global. Guiding the reader from seventeenth-century Pacific explorations to the "opening" of Japan by whalers, coolies, and castaways, and on to the competition over remote islands, Rüegg offers a greater perspective on the role of oceans in the Anthropocene. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Jonas Rüegg teaches global history at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

CAMBRIDGE OCEANIC HISTORIES

Edited by

David Armitage

Renisa Mawani

Sujit Sivasundaram

Across the world, historians have taken an oceanic turn. New maritime histories offer fresh approaches to the study of global regions, and to long-distance and long-term connections. Cambridge Oceanic Histories includes studies across whole oceans (the Pacific, the Indian, the Atlantic) and particular seas (among them, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the North Sea, the Black Sea). The series is global in geography, ecumenical in historical method, and wide in temporal coverage, intended as a key repository for the most innovative transnational and world histories over the *longue durée*. It brings maritime history into productive conversation with other strands of historical research, including environmental history, legal history, intellectual history, labour history, cultural history, economic history and the history of science and technology. The editors invite studies that analyse the human and natural history of the world's oceans and seas from anywhere on the globe and from any and all historical periods.

A full list of titles in the series can be found at:

www.cambridge.org/cambridgeoceanichistories

The Kuroshio Frontier

*Empire and Environment in the
Making of Japan's Pacific*

Jonas Rüegg

University of Zurich



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009534574

DOI: [10.1017/9781009534611](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009534611)

© Jonas Rüegg 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the
provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception
of the Creative Commons version the link for which is provided below,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission
of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009534611
under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC 4.0 which permits
re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial
purposes providing appropriate credit to the original work is given and any
changes made are indicated. To view a copy of this license visit
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>.

The open access publication of this book has been published with the
support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the
DOI [10.1017/9781009534611](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009534611)

First published 2026

Cover image: National Diet Library of Japan

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the
Library of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-53457-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal,
56, 1º, 28003 Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org