

## SUMMARY

### A Reading of the Account Books of J & T Muramats: Ethnography of its Business and Japanese Indentured Laborers in Cossack, Western Australia

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The J & T Muramats was a trading and pearling company run by Jiro Muramats (1878-1943). Born in Kobe, Jiro left for the Pilbara in 1893 at the age of 15. Jiro attended Xavier College where he studied and subsequently mastered bookkeeping. He succeeded the family's retail business in Cossack after his father's sudden death. Jiro went on to become a naturalized British subject in 1899, and successfully developed the business to play an active role in the pearling industry.

I found and digitized 5 volumes of the account books of the J & T Muramats which had been preserved by his descendants in Japan. In this paper I argue that the account books written in English nearly 100 years ago are not only invaluable records of Muramats business, but also vital to understanding the economic activities being conducted in the Pilbara at the time.

I begin by introducing the contents of the account books (cash books; debt books; ledgers such as purchase ledgers, sales ledgers, and payroll ledgers; they also contained various accounts including personal accounts, expense accounts, property accounts and others). I then examine the Muramats' trading and pearling businesses. The study of the account books also sheds light on the lives of Japanese indentured laborers employed by J & T Muramats, as well as Muramats' contribution to the local economy. Finally, I conclude that Muramats' trading business played a vital role in developing his pearling business, as Cossack continued to be the base for the businesses after he and his wife moved to Darwin in 1929. Furthermore, without the J & T Muramats, Cossack would likely have become a ghost town as early as the 1920s.