An Assessment of Japanese Veterans' Recent Reflections on the Second World War's Darker Episodes

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Table of Contents

This thesis is constructed around the histories of each Japanese veteran. After the introduction, historiography, and historical overview, the analyses are presented in the order listed below. In this table of contents, the title of the section is followed by the name of the subject. All Japanese, Korean, and Chinese names are presented in traditional order, with the surname preceding the given name. The names will be given in Western order in footnotes and in the bibliography. Except where direct quotes or titles are being cited, or in the case of standardized names, Chinese names and place names are presented in the Pinyin system of transliteration.

Introduction

This thesis addresses the overall question of Japanese military conduct during the Second World War. In particular, I analyze the scholarly value of two intriguing oral history collections on World War II published in 1992 and 2005. Containing numerous interviews with Japanese veterans, who often appear to discuss their experiences with remarkable candor, these collections potentially shed important new light on the controversial topic of Japanese war crimes. While recognizing the limitations inherent in any oral history project carried out decades after the fact, when memories have faded or potentially been transformed by events in subsequent years, I argue that these two collections are still invaluable to our understanding of Second World War in particular and the phenomena of war crimes in general. As most scholarly treatments of this topic have tended to be heavily weighted toward the perspective of the victims, these two rare and fascinating collections reveal the complex thinking of the perpetrators, thus presenting the exciting possibility of a more balanced and nuanced account of the war's darker episodes.

Now, over seventy years since the end of the Second World War, the issue of Japanese war crimes and atrocities continues to be a controversial one, particularly in Japan itself, where politicians, citizens, and historians, frequently along left and right political lines, still argue over the exact nature of what happened and why. The Western scholarly consensus tends to align with those in Japan who take a strongly critical approach toward the actions of the Japanese military, insisting that the military's actions in many cases clearly fall into the category of war crimes. Debates

over episodes like the Battle of Nanjing have been marked by extreme partisanship by both orthodox and revisionist historians, whose arguments tend to be skewed towards exaggerating the death toll or disputing evidence in favor of atrocities respectively.[1] These arguments have not gained much traction in the international scholarly community, which attempts to moderate, record, and analyze the debate as its own historical phenomenon. The connected issue of war reparations has been similarly divisive in Japan.

Especially in the last couple of decades, scholars have vigorously examined the breadth of this topic, investigating a variety of possible attributing factors like social explanations or intense stress and fear. Popular history has also proliferated in recent years, but most such literature is either apologist or critical. Critical literature tends to emphasize the victims' pain and the horrendous nature of the atrocities. Apologist literature tends to challenge the reliability of evidence used by those who take a more critical approach.[2]

Because oral histories and memoirs pose problems to researchers, like inconsistency, purposeful falsehoods, hidden agendas, and other complexities, oral history is rarely analyzed in a systematic fashion, though it is often used to supplement official documents and publications. Theodore and Hayako Taya Cook produced an oral history volume called *Japan at War*, and Tamayama Kazuo compiled

[1] See the historiography section for more details on this and other debates.
[2] The debates over the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women are two that are frequently treated by both scholars and popular authors. Yoshida Takashi's *The Making of the "Rape of Nanking"* details the historiography of the Nanjing Massacre. Additionally, Japan and Korea reached a new accord over comfort women, which is detailed in a recent New York Times article by Choe Sang-Hun. See the bibliography for more details on these sources.

Railwaymen in the War.[3] Though each has been in print for over a decade, they have been given little attention. *Japan at War* was well reviewed, despite a few criticisms from famed historian Alvin Coox, which mostly centered on the Cooks' mysterious interview and compilation process.[4] Tamayama's work garnered virtually no commentary or use.

The Cooks present an overview of the war and Tamayama introduces the railway regiments that constructed the Thailand-Burma Railway. Both are part of recent scholarship on Japanese war crimes driven by the Cold War's end, the Showa Emperor's death, and the fiftieth anniversary of the conflict. The Cooks conducted interviews with Japanese in the late 1980s, nearly four decades after the end of hostilities, and they give little insight into their interview, editing, or compilation processes. Tamayama drew upon a combination of interviews and unit histories to create his narratives.[5] He also gives little information about his methods. The production process and the nature of the source means that Tamayama and the Cooks' subjects' claims often cannot be validated against more objective sources. However, despite any lapses in memory, or even any falsehoods they tell, these surprisingly

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[3] Theodore and Hayako Taya Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992); Kazuo Tamayama, *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). *Japan at War* covers oral history for many facets of the war, not just war crimes. *Railwaymen* is about the totality of the railway regiments' actions, including combat operations, railway construction, and conditions of prisoners and other laborers on the Thailand-Burma Railway.

[4] Alvin Coox, review of *Japan at War* by Theodore and Hayako Taya Cook and *Soldiers of the Sun* by Meirion and Susan Harries, *The Oral History Review* vol. 22, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 161-164; Stanley Falk, review of *Japan at War* by Theodore and Hayako Taya Cook, *The Journal of Military History* vol. 57, no. 3 (July 1993): 564-565; Andrew Gordon, review of *Japan at War* by Theodore and Hayako Taya Cook, *The Journal of Japanese Studies* vol. 20, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 551-556.

[5] Coox, review of *Japan at War,* 161-162; Tamayama, *Railwaymen*, xiii.

candid histories could aid scholars in illuminating the minds and motives of war criminals. This is increasingly relevant to warfare in the modern and contemporary ages, given the rising global humanitarian spirit and the international community's efforts to end war and excessive violence. It could also develop an even more nuanced understanding of the Second World War and its effect on world affairs.

The Cooks' and Tamayama's histories largely support previous scholarly studies, while demonstrating both the humanity of the perpetrators as well as their barbarity.[6] From their interviews emerges a complex range of factors that led Japanese soldiers to commit war crimes. In their accounts, we can see the impact of racism and dehumanization; desensitization to violence; social pressure such as peers' expectation, superiors' orders, and perceptions of duty; fear and frustration; and material deprivation, to name the most common factors. Yet the Cooks' and Tamayama's interviews demonstrate that not all of these factors seem to have affected all the subjects, and some of them give other explanations, such as political motivations (including idealism and patriotism), threats, desire for personal power, an ignorance of international law, and in one case, "addiction" to murder.[7] In so doing, the Cooks' and Tamayama's works thoroughly reject simplistic explanations of brutality as part of Japanese culture, Bushido, or Shinto.

Historiography

[6] The principle studies are John Dower's *War Without Mercy*, Richard Smethurst's *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism*, and Tanaka Yuki's *Hidden Horrors*. More can be found about these titles in the historiography and bibliography.

[7] Idealism and patriotism would include Japanese nationalism, desire or duty to serve the Emperor, ideas such as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, or the liberation of Asia from colonial powers.

Despite the immense importance of Japanese war crimes, as a facet of the Asia-Pacific Theater in World War II, as a major factor in current foreign relations, and as a model for understanding other atrocities, Japanese war crimes did not immediately attract a great deal of scholarly attention after the war's end. The famed post-war Tokyo Trials brought Japanese war crimes to the attention of the whole world. However, as historian John Dower points out, the Cold War alliance between the United States and Japan inspired both sides of the partnership to "sanitize" the most gruesome aspects of Japan's war.[8] This was called the Reverse Course, in which the US integrated Japan into the anti-Communist coalition. During the American occupation, the Japanese rejected war and militarism, though this was not about their crimes but about the privations they suffered during the conflict.[9]

During the early 1950s, in response to the rising Cold War tensions, the American occupation government in Japan purged communists and communist sympathizers from public prominence in government and media, while allowing nationalist conservatives who had supported Japan's militarism during the war years to return to political and social prominence.[10] Seeing that the United States was willing to back ex-militarists in power, conservatives like Minister of Education Okano Seigo and Hattori Takushiro began to claim that Japan's war policies had been justified,

[8] John Dower, foreword to *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* by Yuki Tanaka (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), xiv. Japan was part of the United States' containment strategy against the Soviet Union.
[9] Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, trans. by Frank Baldwin (New York: Random House, 1978), 250-251.
[10] Takashi Yoshida, "A Battle over History: The Nanjing Massacre in Japan," in *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000), 75-76.

glorious even.[11] Japanese textbooks were revised to promote rearmament and militarism instead of acknowledging the devastation of the war.[12] The nationalist conservatives rebranded World War II as a patriotic war and questioning this patriotism as communist.[13]

In response, Japanese scholars began to discuss during the late 1960s what their military had done overseas and at home. One of the first and most important works of this academic inquiry was *The Pacific War* by Ienaga Saburo. [14] *The Pacific War* is in essence a history of World War II from the Japanese perspective, and it grapples with the difficult questions of war guilt and atrocities, though to a limited degree. Ienaga's work attempts to explain Japanese aggression in the form of a vile military institution and a weak civil government dragging along a duped public into a disastrous, ill-conceived, and "irrational" war.

In a few chapters, Ienaga enumerates the crimes that the Japanese committed in the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere against Chinese, Southeast Asians, and even Japanese citizens. He condemns the "undemocratic" nature of the Japanese of that era as being a major cause of the widespread denial of human rights and freedoms. Ultimately, Ienaga treats war crimes as a component of the overall theme of militarism and Japan's responsibility for starting the war.

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[11] Ienaga, *Pacific War*, 252-253. Because the post-war Japanese constitution forbids the upkeep of an offensively armed military, the United States acted as Japan's protector, giving the American government great influence over their ally's internal affairs.
[12] Ienaga, *Pacific War*, 255.
[13] Yoshida, "Battle over History," 76.
[14] Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War*. Original Japanese edition published in 1968.

In 1971, the debate over the Nanjing Massacre began in Japan with a series of articles by Honda Katsuichi discussing the event. These articles, called "Travels in China," appeared in *Asahi Shinbun*, a respected newspaper in Japan.[15] Naturally this led to a backlash from conservative revisionists. Because of the debate, Nanjing became a symbol of Japanese aggression and war crimes.

During the mid-1970s, victims began to demand reparations or compensation. In 1974, a wartime straggler of the Ami, an oppressed minority group in Japan, emerged from the jungle. Around that time, books based on the wartime experiences of minorities and peoples that Japan colonized were published, leading to calls for the Japanese government to compensate them.[16]

While Japan was rediscovering parts of its darker past, most Americans showed no interest in Japanese war crimes.[17] However, Richard Smethurst's *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism* was published in 1974. The book offers a framework for the interpretation of war crimes, though it discusses militarism, not breeches of international law.[18] Smethurst traces the Japanese Army's preparations for total war through unity of the Japanese people. The Army created organizations that mobilized every portion of the rural population using traditional rural hierarchies to enforce

[15] Takashi Yoshida, *The Making of the "Rape of Nanking"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 82. In Japanese, the article is titled "Chuugoku no tabi." The cited English translation is commonly used.
[16] Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*, trans. Ethan Mark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 242-243.
[17] Yoshida, *Making*, 124-125. He notes that primarily Asian-Americans and media were the main groups that paid attention to mentions of Japan's war crimes.
[18] Richard Smethurst, *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism: The Army and the Rural Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

loyalty to the military, so that loyalty to the nation, as defined by the military, became one and the same with loyalty to the village or hamlet.

In 1982, Asahi Shinbun published an article exposing alleged changes to a new textbook by the Ministry of Education which sparked global outrage.[19] One alleged change was that Japan "advanced into" rather than "invaded" countries in World War II, which some commentators argued made Japan's actions during that time period seem benign. The allegation was false since the changes never occurred.[20] The 1982 textbook controversy brought Japanese war crimes back into the international limelight and spawned a new round of scholarly works.

One such new work was John Dower's *War Without Mercy*.[21] Dower vividly illustrates the American and Japanese racism that drove a war fought with no quarter. The Americans were trained with propaganda to think of the Japanese as monkeys, monsters, or vermin intent on world domination. For example, one American propaganda poster featured in the book is of a "Louseous Japanicas," with a star on its forehead, buckteeth, and a Japanese rising sun flag for a tail.[22] Japanese actions on the battlefield also had a profound effect on American soldiers, who became brutal in response.

In the second half of his book Dower reveals that the Japanese were propagandized to consider themselves morally superior to all other races, and to

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[19] Smethurst, *Social Basis*, 89.
[20] Kenneth Pyle, "Japan Besieged: The Textbook Controversy," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 297-300.
[21] John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).
[22] Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 185.

believe that, being descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, they had the right to rule the world. This was the "pure self." At the same time, the western enemy was portrayed as demonic and evil, which was 'proven' with references to their imperialist past and individualist philosophy, which the propagandists argued was a justification for oppression of the poor. Further evidence was the indiscriminate bombing of Japan that the Americans carried out.

Another book written in the wave of scholarship in the 1980s was *Grassroots Fascism* by Yoshimi Yoshiaki.[23] He wrote his book using journals, memoirs, and other accounts published from the 1970s and onward, realizing that few historians had drawn on them.[24] He presents many Japanese's viewpoints on a variety of topics related to their war experience. Though the book has value as a series of oral histories composed by theme, Yoshimi leaves too much interpretation to the reader. It is immensely difficult to understand what argument he intended to make. Where *Grassroots Fascism* does offer explanation and interpretation, it is only a few lines to vaguely sum up long chapters.

Tanaka Yuki's *Hidden Horrors* follows the tradition set forth by "Travels in China."[25] Along with Honda, Tanaka wrote one of the few highly important works that focused solely on Japanese war atrocities. Most scholarship instead dealt with issues of governance, war responsibility, or aggressiveness rather than massacres and ill treatment of prisoners of war (POWs) or non-combatants. Most mentioned war

[23] Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism.* Original published in 1987.
[24]Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism*, 257.
[25] Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996). Original published in Japanese in 1993. Tanaka also goes by the given name Toshiyuki.

crimes and atrocities, but discussed them as a portion of wider issues, leaving the historiography of the subject underdeveloped.

Tanaka posits that Japanese war crimes, while heinous and cruel, were not unique as many scholars, including Japanese historians, seemed to think.[26] Many hypotheses blamed cultural expressions like Bushido,[27] claiming that the Japanese have some kind of natural propensity to torture and kill in exceptional ways. He also notes that the Japanese see themselves as victims, not accepting their responsibility as victimizers, which is commonly acknowledged among those who study Japanese war crimes.

Using records from the war crimes trials the Australians conducted, Tanaka demonstrates that Japanese soldiers committed terrible crimes and that they were greatly pressured, abused, or frustrated by superiors and war conditions which led them to commit atrocities. For instance, a soldier who was beaten and brutalized by a superior, hungry after supply lines were cut off, unable to do anything about the continuous Allied bombing raids, and fearful of native reprisals would relieve his immense stress by beating, starving, torturing, and killing POWs and non-combatants. Rape was similarly caused, but was also seen as a form of recreation and relaxation in a military that allowed no leisure activities.

Some of the decisions had more 'logical' justifications. Biological weapons tests on human subjects who were considered expendable 'saved' Japanese lives.

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[26] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 3.

[27] Bushido, meaning "way of the warrior," is a code of honor. The closest Western equivalent is Chivalry.

POWs were overworked and underfed to prevent Japanese soldiers from being overworked and underfed. Having taken all these factors into consideration, Tanaka gives examples of other peoples and wars in which atrocities occurred, breaking the myth that the Japanese are the only ones who did horrible things. But he also does not allow the Japanese to be absolved of the crimes because others also committed crimes or because the Japanese also suffered.

The early 1990s experienced an uproar in literature and discussion of Japanese war crimes, both in Japan and the United States, caused by a number of important events. The first of these was the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989, which prompted discussions of his importance to the war and his war responsibility.[28] In 1945, as Japan neared surrender, the government requested assurances from the Allies that they could keep their head of state. However, the Allies only replied that the people would decide the government's new form. President Harry Truman decided against offering a concession allowing the emperor to remain enthroned once he heard on July 16 that the atomic Trinity test had been successful.[29] Following the surrender, Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander Allied Powers of the Occupation force, allowed the emperor to remain on the throne in the hope that it would placate the populace and avert serious trouble for the occupation government.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War also favored the study of Japanese war crimes, since it broke the political bindings that had protected

[28] Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime*, (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1991), vii.
[29] Takafusa Nakamura, *A History of Showa Japan, 1926-1989*, trans. Edwin Whenmouth (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1998), 226.

Japan from its past. This factor, along with the Showa Emperor's death, led the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan to encourage some of its members to step forward with the stories of their enslavement as comfort women.[30] Three women filed suit against Japan in 1991, which prompted a maelstrom of debate over the comfort women system the Japanese military used during World War II.

Yoshimi Yoshiaki answered these claims with a thorough analysis of the comfort system in *The Comfort Women*.[31] Yoshimi documents how the Japanese authorities decided that organized 'prostitution' was essential to soldiers' morale and to preventing frequent wartime rapes that made keeping order in their occupied territories difficult. He demonstrates systematically that the comfort women could be found anywhere Japanese soldiers were and that they were rarely willing prostitutes, usually 'recruited' by fraudulent or coercive means. In the comfort stations, the women would be violently raped multiple times a day.[32] Reviewer Daniela Rechenberger praises Yoshimi for bringing testimony from both the perpetrators of the comfort system and the women themselves, which shows the systematic nature of the comfort institution

[30] Suzanne O'Brien, translator's introduction to *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* by Yoshiaki Yoshimi (New York: Columbia Press, 2000), 3.
[31] Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Original Japanese published in 1995.
[32] Much like Tanaka did with other war crimes, Yoshimi describes how other militaries of the time also engaged in sexual slavery. However, he notes the extreme excess of the Japanese crimes at the same time.

by revealing the perpetrators' intentions.[33] This is one of the few works that discusses the perpetrators' point of view.

Even as this controversy raged, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war loomed in 1995, stirring more discussion of Japan's war guilt. Histories of Japanese war crimes intended for popular consumption became prominent, often fueled by nationalism, victimhood, or moral outrage.[34] Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* is an especially significant popular history, since it stoked the Nanjing Massacre debate by reviving a discredited theory from the 1980s.[35] She contends that when the city fell into their hands, "Japanese soldiers began an orgy of cruelty seldom if ever matched in world history."[36] Though much of her evidence has been refuted and her tone is hardly neutral, the book has remained famous as the spark of American interest in the subject.[37] Her thesis is also touted by

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[33] Daniela Rechenberger, review of *The Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* by Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *Social Science Japan Journal* vol. 6, no. 2 (October 2003): 312-315.

[34] One example is Raymond Lamont-Brown's *Ships from Hell*. Lamont-Brown simply informs the reader of the Japanese Navy's crimes. However, his evidence is only anecdotes, which he repeats with little skepticism, and virtually no historical context. This gives a reader the impression that the Japanese are uniquely evil, which was the perception that Tanaka wished to combat. A second example is Ralph Modder's *The Singapore Chinese Massacre*. Modder emphasizes Japanese crimes, but also chastises the British for not handing out 'proper' justice. Modder does offer context for the massacre, also known as the Sook Ching, through an overview of the origins of the war and of the events preceding the massacre. Modder also includes a few statements about why the Japanese killed the Malayan Chinese, but these are only briefly explained. See the bibliography for more information.

[35] Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "The Nanking Massacre: Now You See It,…" review of *What Really Happened in Nanking: The Refutation of a Common Myth* by Masaaki Tanaka*, The Alleged Nanking Massacre: Japan's Rebuttal to China's Forged Claims* by Tadao Takamoto and Yasuo Ohara, and *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* by Masahiro Yamamoto, *Monumenta Nipponica* vol. 56, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 527-528. Wakabayashi blames Chang and China for handing Japanese revisionists power by propagating a disproven theory.

[36] Chang, *Rape of Nanking*, 4.

[37] Yoshida, *Making*, 179. One discredited source Chang used was David Bergamini's *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, which was so thoroughly refuted that reviewer Okamoto Shunpei called it a "fiction."

the Chinese government, which sought to use the Nanking Massacre as a symbol for Japanese aggression to bind the Chinese together after Maoism lost force as a national unifier.[38]

Chang represents the orthodox extreme of the Nanjing Massacre's historiography, while Higashinakano Shudo's *The Nanking Massacre* represents the revisionist extreme.[39] The thesis of *The Nanking Massacre* is that the massacre was fabricated by the Chinese Nationalists with the help of foreigners to serve as war propaganda. Most of the book is dedicated to systematically rejecting the evidence that supports the existence of Japanese crimes in the city. The book is clearly propaganda given the critical handling of sources that contradict the thesis, and the dearth of analysis extended to sources that agree with the thesis. Nationalism is a significant motivator for Higashinakano.

In summary, following World War II, the world mostly forgot the pain of Japanese atrocities in the looming Cold War tensions, and that remained the status quo until the late 1960s when the orthodox view, represented by Ienaga, rose to prominence in response to the failure of many in Japan to acknowledge their national past. The conversation stayed mostly in Japan during the 1970s and early 1980s, and focused on discussions of Japanese aggression and militarism as the main subject rather than war crimes and atrocities. Only in the 1980s, with the 1982 textbook controversy, and

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Shunpei Okamoto, review of *Japan's Imperial* Conspiracy by David Bergamini, *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 31, no. 2 (Feb 1972): 416.

[38] James Orr, review of *The Making of the 'Rape of Nanking:' History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* by Takashi Yoshida, *Pacific Affairs* vol. 80, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 364-366.

[39] Shudo Higashinakano, *The Nanking Massacre: Fact versus Fiction*, trans. Sekai Shuppan, Inc (Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan, Inc, 2005). Original published in Japanese in 1998.

early 1990s did the discussion become truly international. Scholars focused on war crimes instead of using them as a facet of broader narratives.

In the early 1990s and 2000s, written material on the subject proliferated in response to the Showa Emperor's death, the end of the Cold War, and the fiftieth anniversary of the war's resolution. These events prompted more criticism of Japan's reluctance to acknowledge and compensate its victims. In a way, this has always been the cause of literature on Japanese war crimes. When Japan does not seem to be taking its war crimes seriously, victims and others take up their pens to attempt to elicit a meaningful apology. Revisionists and Japanese nationalists then strike back. Some of the works are excellent scholarly contributions while others are more dubious. Popular literature is especially fueled by emotion rather than intellectual curiosity, resulting in the plethora of partisan books written in recent years about Japanese crimes and atrocities in World War II.

Contrary to popular belief, the Japanese do not universally deny their culpability. There are two major groups, the orthodox scholars who acknowledge Japanese atrocities, and the revisionists, including politicians, scholars, and others, who do not. In the US, there are no well-known revisionists, and the orthodox interpretation of historical fact is generally accepted. However, there is a moderate view of the orthodox interpretation, and an emotional position that angrily castigates Japanese war crimes.

Historical Overview

In order to grasp the recollections of the Japanese soldiers, it is necessary to understand the historical consensus on Japanese war crimes and atrocities. To understand the nature of crimes committed by Japanese forces during the 1930s and '40s, an overview of three crimes and their context will be given. Due to the limitations of the oral histories at hand, the war crimes discussed in this paper will be limited mostly to torture, illegal killing, and unethical experiments on POWs or laborers. They are the Nanjing Massacre, the Sook Ching, and the Burma-Thailand Railway project. These crimes were chosen as representative of activities soldiers and field officers would have committed, rather than overarching war crimes like waging aggressive war.

The origins of combat in Asia's World War II can be traced to the Manchurian Incident of September 1931. Some Kwantung Army[40] officers stationed near the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway blew up a section of the track, blamed it on 'Chinese bandits,' and invaded Manchuria to 'secure' the region. In 1932, the puppet state of Manchukuo was established under Pu Yi, the former emperor of China. The situation was localized in Manchuria and the northern reaches of China until the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937. Some Japanese troops were on maneuvers near the Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beijing. Historians are not sure who fired first, but these men and some Chinese soldiers across the river exchanged shots. The fighting quickly expanded to all-out undeclared war in northern China.

[40] The Kwantung Army, or Kantogun, was the Japanese field army stationed in Manchuria.

The Japanese Imperial Army found itself in an unfortunate predicament. Most officers and even the general public had expected a quick win, but they were sorely mistaken. The government pushed for expanded conflict to 'punish' the Chinese for their 'insolence' in one major battle.[41] But the Chinese resisted more fiercely than expected, and the Japanese leadership repeatedly widened the scope of the conflict, hoping to defeat the Chinese. In fact, one objective of the invasion of Southeast Asia in 1941 was to cut off the Burma Road that the Allies used to supply the Chinese Nationalist military. The war's increasing breadth and the enlisted men's frustration at Chinese resistance led to the Nanjing Massacre.[42] Japanese frustration also engendered extreme tactics such as the Three All policy. This was the policy to kill, steal, and burn everything to deny it to the Chinese Communist guerrillas. It also left the Chinese peasants without recourse, but since they were thought to be sympathetic to the guerrillas, this was disregarded. Thus, along with the racism that caused the Japanese soldiers to expect a quick end to the war, frustration bred excessive violence against the Chinese.

Nanjing Massacre

Fighting spread into Shanghai in August after a Japanese lieutenant died there.[43] Japanese forces found the battle difficult, with unexpectedly high casualties and ammunition running low. Though the Japanese hoped one decisive victory would end the conflict, they were disappointed: the Japanese flanked the Chinese with an

[41] Akira Fujiwara, "The Nanking Atrocity: An Interpretive Overview," in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 30.
[42] Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 30.
[43] Nakamura, *History of Showa Japan*, 143-144.

amphibious assault at Hangzhou Bay in early November 1937, breaking the stalemate, but the Chinese Army escaped encirclement and destruction.[44] The Chinese retreated to Nanjing, the capital of Nationalist China. Here, Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Nationalist Party's leader, planned to make a stand against the invaders, despite protests from his military advisors who swore the city was indefensible.[45] Because the Japanese military was hurrying to catch the Chinese and surround Nanjing, combat units outpaced supply units, and the Japanese plundered towns and villages for food and supplies. The Japanese also committed rape, arson, and murder as they marched towards the city.[46]

As the Japanese approached, refugees and soldiers poured into Nanjing while the wealthy, the middle class, and Nationalist officials evacuated. Most foreigners also fled, save for a few who formed the International Committee and the Nanjing Safety Zone. The Zone was intended to provide refuge from the fighting for Chinese civilians, but both the Chinese and the Japanese militaries violated its proclaimed neutrality. Though the Chinese agreed to respect the Zone, they built military installations and fortifications within it. While the Japanese never agreed to abide by the Zone's neutrality, their artillery carefully avoided shelling the Zone. Nevertheless,

[44] Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 31.
[45] David Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking: December 1937 to February 1938," in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 230.
[46] Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 32; Tokushi Kasahara, "Massacres Outside the Nanking City," in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 57.

the Japanese violated the Zone's neutrality by searching it for hidden Chinese soldiers, with some justification, since Chinese soldiers fled there when the city fell.[47]

As the Japanese surrounded Nanjing, General Dang Sheng-Shi, the Chinese commanding officer, fled the city on December 12, abandoning his troops to their fate. The Japanese breached the gates the next day, and Chinese soldiers routed. Some escaped to the Nanjing Safety Zone, shedding their uniforms in order to hide, while others attempted to cross the Yangtze River. According to historian Fujiwara Akira, "They hoped to cross the Yangtze by boat, by raft, or by clinging desperately to scraps of lumber, or they madly ran up and down the riverbank, only to encounter Japanese forces sent to cut them off."[48] The Japanese immediately began 'mop up operations' on December 13 to capture Chinese soldiers still in the city and its environs, fearing possible resistance. Some historians claim they also hoped to reap vengeance for the Chinese's stiff resistance. Despite the legitimacy of their concern about resistance, the Japanese soldiers engaged in unnecessary violence. They raped women, murdered alleged Chinese soldiers, and looted and torched buildings. There were so few Kenpei, or Imperial Army police officers, with the invasion force that there was virtually no enforcement of discipline.[49] This was a reflection of Japan's disregard for China's sovereignty, which also manifested itself as a memo telling soldiers they need not stick to the letter of international law.[50]

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[47] Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking," 228-231, 233.
[48] Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 38.
[49] "Kenpei" refers to an individual officer, while "Kenpeitai" refers to the organization.
[50] Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 36.

Some killings were organized executions of any Chinese men deemed dangerous, with the Mufushan massacre being one example. In this massacre, the 65th Regiment brought 17,000-20,000 Chinese prisoners to the banks of the Yangtze, on the premise that they would be transported to an island in the river for holding. The Japanese placed them in a barbed wire enclosure and gunned them down before bayoneting anyone who survived the initial attack. Once the Chinese POWs were dead, the soldiers coated them in oil, burned them, and tossed the charred bodies into the river. This massacre occurred on December 16 and 17, after the cessation of hostilities, and was clearly a well-planned, non-combat operation.[51]

There were also numerous random acts of arson, murder, and rape after the city fell, particularly out in the countryside where there were fewer witnesses.[52] Within the city, Chinese and Westerners both resisted and collaborated with the Japanese. Historians Timothy Brook and David Askew wrote that the Chinese and the International Committee cooperated with the Japanese because there was no other option if they wished to prevent further death and destruction.[53] Brook cites a Chinese criminal named Jimmy Wang who helped the International Committee investigate murder sites but also rounded up prostitutes for the Japanese.[54] The Westerners

[51] Kenji Ono, "Massacres Near Mufushan," in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 76-84.
[52] Kasahara, "Massacres Outside Nanking City," 68.
[53] Timothy Brook, "Chinese Collaboration in Nanking," in *The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); David Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking."
[54] Brook, "Chinese Collaboration in Nanking," 220-221.

recorded massacres and provided humanitarian relief such as food and medicine, but had to work with the Japanese puppet government to supply the city.[55]

The massacre is a hotly contested event, with debates over both details and narratives. As mentioned above, Iris Chang and Higashinakano Shudo present two opposing views, which moderate historian Hata Ikuhiko respectively terms the Great Massacre and Illusion Schools of Thought.[56] The Great Massacre School inflates the body count. The Illusion School is mostly Japanese conservative nationalists who argue that the massacre is a hoax. The moderate school is between the two of these; proponents acknowledge a massacre while estimating lower death tolls. The immense proliferation of politically charged literature has led scholars to research the argument as well as the event. It was actually easier for me to locate unbiased books about the debate than about the massacre itself.

Sook Ching

The fall of Nanjing did not end Chinese resistance. As the war continued, and the scope of Japanese operations in China expanded, tensions between Japan and the West, especially the United States, steadily rose. The Japanese government claimed foreign powers, who issued more and more economic sanctions against the island nation, were encircling Japan.[57] In the hope that they could cut off supplies to the Chinese and secure resources for themselves, the Japanese decided to attack southward. On December 8, 1941, along with the raid on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese

[55] Askew, "Westerners in Occupied Nanking."
[56] Ikuhiko Hata, "The Nanking Atrocities: Fact and Fable," in *An Overview of the Nanjing Debate* (Tokyo: Japan Echo, 2008), 111.
[57] This is known as the ABCD Encirclement. "ABCD" stands for "American-British-Chinese-Dutch."

launched an invasion of Thailand and amphibious assaults against British Malaya.[58] Thailand rapidly capitulated, but the British held on longer. Still, by February 15, General Percival, commander of the British forces in Singapore, surrendered to the Japanese.

On February 18, Major General Yamashita Tomoyuki ordered "mopping-up operations" to commence in Singapore.[59] These operations would become the Singapore Chinese Massacre or the Sook Ching, which means "purification through elimination." Lieutenant General Kawamura Saburo was the officer in charge, but Lieutenant Colonel Tsuji Masanobu and Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Suzuki Sosaku were the planners, and had prepared the operation before the invasion of Singapore occurred.[60] The Kenpeitai recruited 1,000 auxiliaries from the regular soldiers to round up Chinese men aged eighteen to fifty-five for "screening" and to search houses for contraband and fugitives.[61] They were supposed to find Communists, Chinese soldiers, looters, and troublemakers during the screening, but the population was too large to be screened in the three-day limit. Japanese civilian administrator Shinozaki Mamoru said everyone who was a threat had already gone into hiding; the Japanese would only be punishing innocent people.[62] The screening

[58] The date was December 7 in Hawaii and the United States.
[59] Hirofumi Hayashi, "The Battle of Singapore, the Massacre of Chinese, and Understanding of the Issue in Postwar Japan," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* vol. 28, no. 4 (July 2009): section "Why did the Japanese Military Massacre Chinese in Singapore?" Accessed September 29, 2015. http://japanfocus.org/-hayashi-hirofumi/3187/article.html.
[60] Hayashi, "Battle of Singapore," section "Why did the Japanese Military Massacre Chinese in Singapore?"
[61] Lee Geok Boi, *The Syonan Years: Singapore Under Japanese Rule, 1942-1945* (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore, 2005), 105.
[62] Mamoru Shinozaki, *My Wartime Experiences in Singapore*, Oral History Programme Series 3, interview by Lim Yoon Lin (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, August 1973), 23.

was haphazard, with no uniformity in questioning or procedure. In some cases, people were questioned about their names, occupations, acquaintances, and so on. Other screeners checked for signs that 'proved' people were educated, such as glasses, soft hands, and English or Chinese education. Those with tattoos were suspected of being members of secret anti-Japanese societies. Another screening method involved hooded informants pointing out 'guilty' people.[63]

Some were arbitrarily saved during the screening process. Since Shinozaki held an important office in the military administration, he was able to save a number of Chinese by issuing protection cards or plucking them out of screening camps when friends or family came to him for help. He said later, "I didn't care, anybody who came to see me, I gave [protection cards]. The Kenpeitai probably knew about this but were too busy with their own job. But it is impossible to tell who is pro-Japanese and who is anti-Japanese."[64] In another example, a man from Shanghai met a Japanese soldier who had been stationed in Shanghai. This soldier discreetly released the man.[65]

Those labelled 'anti-Japanese' were driven in trucks to remote places, often beaches, and shot with machine guns. Those who survived the shootings were bayonetted. At the beaches, the tide was expected to carry the bodies out to sea, while elsewhere bodies were buried in shallow graves. Some survived the massacres, such as Wong Peng Yin, who swam away after he was forced to walk into the ocean to be

[63] Lee, *Syonan*, 107-108.
[64] Shinozaki, *Wartime Experiences*, 21.
[65] Lee, *Syonan*, 109.

shot, and Chua Choon Guan, who was not killed by the bullets and escaped notice under the bodies of other victims.[66]

Interestingly, the Japanese did not seem to care who knew about the massacres. In fact, it may have been intended to terrify the local population, according to historian Hayashi Hirofumi. General Yamashita had an important role in the war in China as the formulator of the Three All policy.[67] The experience in China with stubborn guerrilla resistance caused Japanese commanders like Yamashita to believe before they even attacked Singapore that the Chinese there would be anti-Japanese.[68] The Sook Ching seems, therefore, to have been an extension of similar policies in China, carried out to terrify the local population into compliance.

This highlights an important point: the similarities between the Sook Ching and the Nanjing Massacre. In both places, the people in the city were rounded up and the men were labelled dangerous resistance elements, though there was rarely any evidence that they were engaged in resistance. Summary executions were the norm in both cases, and even the method of execution—machine guns followed by bayonetting survivors near bodies of water—was similar. The Japanese did not seem particularly bothered by who knew about the atrocities, though the executions were always at least thinly veiled.

The differences between the two are also enlightening, as they demonstrate how circumstances changed the nature of the violence inflicted during the war.

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[66] Ralph Modder, *The Singapore Chinese Massacre*, *18 February to 4 March 1942* (Singapore: Horizon Books, 2004), 63.
[67] Hayashi, "Battle of Singapore," section "Rebuttal of the Defense."
[68] Hayashi, "Battle of Singapore," section "Rebuttal of the Defense."

Perhaps the most important difference is that the massacres at Singapore were relatively orderly. Despite the obvious disorganization and arbitrary victim selection, an order was definitely issued by the commanding officer and followed without the excess violence seen at Nanjing. While some orders were also issued at Nanjing to execute prisoners and stragglers, there was a lot of arbitrary violence such as murder and rape that was not present at Singapore.[69] This seems to reflect two circumstantial differences. First, the British surrendered formally in an organized fashion. Japanese troops were kept out of Singapore by the terms of the surrender, meaning that there were fewer soldiers in the city who might commit crimes. Neither side was confused or apprehensive since the British did not rout like the Chinese during the fall of Nanjing. Second, the Chinese were only one ethnic group in the city and the Japanese wished to recruit other Southeast Asians to their cause. As mentioned above, the Japanese expected Chinese people to resist them and so held them in contempt. With fewer Chinese in Singapore than Nanjing, and people whose favor the Japanese wished to earn, there was more incentive to avoid mass murder, rape, arson, and looting which would deter the populace from cooperating with Japanese rule. The opposite was true at Nanjing, where the Japanese war slogans proclaimed the need to "punish the insolent Chinese."

The plan to subdue the population with terror seems to have worked, in a sense. During the initial stages of the occupation, the Japanese publically displayed the

[69] Higashinakano, *Fact Versus Fiction*, 65-83; Fujiwara, "Interpretive Overview," 43. Higashinakano claims that these orders meant to release POWs or kill only the unruly ones. This conclusion is not convincing, but rather demonstrates that the orders existed.

decapitated heads of looters which led to an all-time low in crime.[70] While it reduced interference with Japanese actions, it also discouraged people from cooperating with the Japanese. Major Fujiwara Iwaichi of Japanese Army intelligence, who was recruiting Indians to his Indian National Army (INA), complained to his superiors that the killing was slowing recruitment.[71] However, the shock evidently wore off, because the Japanese did create the INA, and the Sook Ching ultimately spawned anti-Japanese resistance.[72]

Burma-Thailand Railway

After Singapore fell, the conquest of Southeast Asia continued with the defeat of Allied forces in Burma, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies.[73] In only a few months, the Japanese decisively defeated the armed forces of powerful western nations—Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands—in their Southeast Asian colonies. The French had two governments vying for control: the pro-Allied government-in-exile run by Charles de Gaulle and the pro-Axis regime based in Vichy. The Japanese had worked out a deal with the government of French Indochina[74] to avoid political entanglements with their nominal ally. Japanese forces

[70] Lee, *Syonan*, 100.
[71] Iwaichi Fujiwara, *F Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia During World War II,* trans. Yoji Akashi (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 193.
[72] Hayashi, "Battle of Singapore," section "Rebuttal of the Defense."
[73] Burma and the Dutch East Indies are modern-day Myanmar and Indonesia respectively.
[74] Modern-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

occupied and controlled the colony while French colonial officials administered it officially.[75]

The victory was spectacular and astonishing, but Japan's fortune soon reversed. In May 1942, disaster struck at the Battle of Midway. The Americans dealt severe damage to the Japanese fleets, effectively wiping out their offensive capability.[76] The battle of Guadalcanal in August also diminished the Japanese Navy, and Japan's industrial might was not strong enough to replace the losses.[77] The Allies were thus able to control the sea. Japanese soldiers' narratives of the late years of the war frequently note the incredible danger involved in sea or land travel due to the ubiquitous presence of Allied submarines and airplanes. Maritime supply became fraught with danger since the Japanese Navy could not adequately protect the merchant marine.

Hoping to facilitate supply for the Army in Burma, the Japanese commanders ordered the construction of a railway to connect Burma and Thailand.[78] POWs built this vital railway in brutal conditions, with deadly consequences. The conditions became well-known thanks to the 1957 movie *Bridge Over the River Kwai.* Also, many prisoners returned home to describe inadequate food, medicine, and shelter, and horrifying abuse and exploitation. For instance, one POW detachment evidently

[75] Nakamura, *History of Showa Japan*, 166-167; Vu Ngu Chieu, "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam (March-August 1945)," *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 45, no. 2 (February 1986): 294.
[76] Jeremy Black, "Midway and the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* vol. 62, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 137.
[77] Thomas G. Mahnken, "Asymmetric Warfare at Sea: The Naval Battles of Guadalcanal, 1942-1943," *Naval War College Review* vol. 64, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 113.
[78] Charles A. Fisher, "The Thailand-Burma Railway," *Economic Geography* vol. 23, no. 2 (April 1947): 87.

worked for twelve weeks without a day off with an average of three hours' rest per day.[79] Guards and overseers beat these men while forcing them to work even when gravely ill with beriberi, tropical ulcers, and malaria.[80] Sir Edward Dunlop, a famous Australian ex-POW, related that POWs who could not stand were forced to work sitting or lying down.[81]

Native Asian laborers also suffered on the railway. The Japanese had planned the exploitation of Southeast Asia before they invaded and decided to use native laborers to access the region's rich resources.[82] This would not be an inherently bad thing if the regulations created to protect the workers had been followed.[83] Initially, the workers were recruited with promised incentives that often never came, and later they were abducted or tricked into accepting the jobs.[84] The conditions in their camps were even worse than in the POW camps. Without the military discipline that kept order among the POWs, the Asian laborers suffered immensely.[85] Their barracks were not waterproof; there was not enough food or water, with no water at all for bathing; and

[79] Tom Morris, "Memories of the Burma-Thailand Railway," in *The Burma-Thailand Railway*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1993), 28.
[80] Beriberi is caused by a vitamin B deficiency. Symptoms include numbness in the hands and feet, paralysis of the legs, and difficulty breathing.
[81] Sir Edward Dunlop, "Reflections, 1946 and 1991," in *The Burma Thailand Railway*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1993), 146.
[82] Murai Yoshinori, "Asian Forced Labor (Romusha) on the Burma-Thailand Railway," in *The Burma-Thailand Railway*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1993), 60.
[83] Yoshinori, "Asian Forced Labor," 64-65.
[84] Michiko Nakahara, "Malayan Labor on the Thailand-Burma Railway," in *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories* (London: ME Sharpe, 2005), 253-256.
[85] E. Bruce Reynolds, "History, Memory, Compensation, and Reconciliation: The Abuse of Labor Along the Thailand-Burma Railway," in *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire: Unknown Histories* (London: ME Sharpe, 2005), 329.

when they died in even greater numbers than the POWs, they were buried in mass graves.[86]

Other interests had considered the construction of such a railway, but had not attempted it since the route's geography was not conducive to safe construction, and sea transportation was cheaper.[87] The rugged mountain terrain, the dense, disease-infested jungle, and the difficulties in supplying a work force had proved too daunting for previous investors, but the Japanese desperately needed a land route. Japanese accounts report several problems compounded these difficulties. Power tools were scarce, hand tools were inferior and easily broken, work was rushed, there were few guards or overseers, and dangerous terrain and weather impeded supply of vital medicine and food.[88] A cholera epidemic in May 1943 ravaged the workers, and June saw heavy Allied bombing. Both worsened conditions for the native laborers and the POWs.[89]

Organizational conflicts also troubled the project. The 5th and 9th Railway Regiments of the Southern Army constructed the track, while separate, independent organizations cared for and guarded the POWs.[90] In Thailand, the organization was the Thailand POW Accommodation. Each camp was charged by the Accommodation with caring for the POWs, while the Railway Regiment wanted to utilize the POWs' labor

[86] Nakahara, "Malayan Labor," 258-261.
[87] Fisher, "Thailand-Burma Railway."
[88] Tamayama, *Railwaymen.* References to these conditions are made throughout the accounts in the book.
[89] Tamayama, *Railwaymen*, 11.
[90] Kazuo Tamayama, "The Relationship between the Railway Regiment and the POW Camps," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 161.

to complete their task on time. The POWs worked on the railway according to conditions specified by the camp commandants.

Sometimes, the POWs were treated fairly. The official rules were strict regarding POW treatment, as one Japanese soldier attested.[91] They were to be treated according to the Geneva Convention. There were even times of camaraderie. One time, a group of POWs, ex-artillery men, spontaneously helped some teenage Japanese soldiers push a field gun up an embankment.[92] In another case, POWs and Japanese soldiers were able to work smoothly together on a bridge when it was discovered that a Russian folk song enabled the POWs to coordinate better. During this lighthearted singing and working, a POW fell in the river but was saved by a young guard.[93] However, when supplies decreased, the POWs became weak. Still, the urgency of the project remained, and so the POWs were underfed and overworked. The same was true of the native laborers, except they were under the Railway Regiments' direct control.[94]

The End of the World War II

After the Japanese loss at Guadalcanal, the Americans pushed the Japanese back in a series of difficult battles. In Europe, Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945 after heavy fighting in Berlin, but Japan continued to fight. The militarists hoped to win a decisive battle on the Home Islands that would force the Americans to negotiate, but Emperor Hirohito had made former Grand Chamberlain Suzuki Kantaro the prime

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[91] Masaru Tsuruta, "The Volga Boat-Song and the Bridge," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 82.
[92] Dick Gilman, "Joining the Railways," in *The Burma Thailand Railway*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1993), 47.
[93] Tsuruta, "The Volga Boat-Song," 85, 90.
[94] Tamayama, "Relationship Between Railway Regiment and the POW Camps," 161.

minister and on June 8 directly asked Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Koichi to end the war.[95] Both Suzuki and Kido were trusted advisors, and along with Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori, they constituted the peace party. However, the military still possessed enough power to thwart their efforts to accept Allied demands for surrender, and the government stalemated.

Ultimately, the atomic bombs tipped the balance.[96] With the American invasion of Kyushu planned for November 1, President Truman ordered the atomic bombs to be dropped in the hope that the Japanese would surrender before American lives were lost in a costly campaign.[97] The first bomb laid waste to Hiroshima on August 6, and the second devastated Nagasaki on August 9. The Soviet Union invaded Manchukuo on August 9 as well. Then, Suzuki broke imperial precedent and asked Hirohito for a ruling that would break the stalemate; the Emperor called for peace. This tipped the political balance and forced the military leadership to accept defeat. The surrender took effect on August 15.

These incidents constitute the wider historical context in which the men who relate their stories below acted. They often faced difficult, dangerous situations and acted based on their unique situation. Despite the importance of their testimony, almost none of the current historiographical trends incorporate their voices in history: voices that admit their mistakes (if they are sometimes defensive about them), and attempt to explain what they thought and felt about the episodes.

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[95] Nakamura, *History of Showa Japan*, 221-223.
[96] Sadao Asada, "The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender," in *Hiroshima in History: The Myths of Revisionism* (Columbia, Missouri: The Missouri University Press, 2007), 24-58.
[97] Kyushu is the southernmost of the four main islands in Japan.

To Lead the "Tiger-Eyed"

Tominaga Shozo was a university student when the war in China erupted.[98] After graduating, he obtained employment in Manchukuo before being drafted as a 2nd Lieutenant in July 1941. He had no desire to serve in the military, but related that he never questioned it or voiced his reluctance. He was placed in command of a platoon in the Yangtze River Basin near Chongqing.[99]

When he met his soldiers, he felt uncomfortable, since he was fresh out of officer training school with no battle experience. However, the troops now under his command were battle-hardened. Their experience of war in Central China, a notoriously brutal theatre, seemed to have given them "evil eyes," Tominaga recounted, "They weren't human eyes, but the eyes of leopards or tigers."[100] A veteran officer told Tominaga and the other officer recruits that they would each need to decapitate a Chinese prisoner. Only then would these new officers earn the respect of the "tiger-eyed" troops now under their command. "These [Chinese prisoners] are the raw materials for your trial of courage," the veteran said, showing the candidate officers the prisoners to be executed.[101] Tominaga was shocked to see the prisoners.

[98] Shozo Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 40-44. For clarity's sake, the sections of *Japan at War* and *Railwaymen in the War* that the accounts are taken from will be cited as presented in this footnote, using the subject's name instead of the author's name, followed by the section title. All sections are also included in the bibliography as separate entries from the collections they were taken from. They are listed under the subject's name, rather than the author's name.

[99] Chongqing was the Chinese Nationalist capital, meaning that Tominaga was at an advance post.

[100] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 40.

[101] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 41.

They were so thin—the officer explained that the POWs had not been fed for days so they would be ready for the beheadings.

When the day came, the regimental commander, the battalion commander, and all the platoon commanders—all of Tominaga's superiors and peers—were present for the battlefield initiation. An officer had an orderly bring up the first POW to the edge of a mass grave. The captive struggled but was unable to escape. The officer demonstrated how to decapitate a man using this prisoner. "The scene was so appalling that I felt I couldn't breathe. All the candidate officers stiffened," he recalled.[102]

Three of the would-be commanders killed captured soldiers that day before Tominaga. Up until this point, he seemed to have been horrified by the audacity of the Japanese: he was shocked at the condition of the Chinese prisoners, and he was horrified by the ghastly scene at the initiation. He was not a 'gung-ho' soldier, since he made clear that he felt no desire to join the Imperial Army. Yet, when he stepped forward to end a prisoner's life, he thought "Don't do anything unseemly!"[103] In the moment that he walked towards his victim, he was less concerned with the Chinese man than about the disgrace he would suffer should he botch the execution in front of his peers and his superiors.

> I was tense, thinking I couldn't afford to fail. I took a deep breath…steadied myself…and swung [the blade] down with one breath. The head flew away and the body tumbled down, spouting blood. The

[102] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 41.
[103] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 41.

> air reeked from all the blood…I noticed…that my sword was slightly bent.[104]

Tominaga recalled that he felt a strange strength come from the murder. When he returned to his unit, he felt superior to the men he commanded. This kind of ritual killing was used in battlefield training for all recruits, regardless of rank, and Tominaga reflected years later that the commanders believed that brutalization of the soldiers was necessary to make them fight well. It was believed to be, as the veteran officer said, a "trial of courage."

Tominaga suggested the brutal induction made further violence easier. He mentioned that massacres of Chinese civilians occurred regularly, as they were believed to aid the enemy. Thus they were regarded as the enemy rather than as non-combatants. As such, international law was not applied to them, just as international law was not applied to the war in China because it was officially a "conflict," not a war.[105] Officers like Tominaga were not instructed even superficially in international law.[106] Japan had not rationalized civilians and prisoners as legitimate targets for violence in their previous foreign wars in the modern era. But this was the first such conflict where the government did not try to obey the rules of war to impress the West.

Tominaga's recollections demonstrate the connection between dehumanization and war crimes in particular and battlefield violence more broadly. All militaries need dehumanization, or mental distance from the enemy or target. If a soldier sees his enemy as truly human, killing is much harder. One does not have to despise the

[104] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 42.
[105] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 73.
[106] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 194.

enemy, but think of them impersonally. The mechanization of warfare with tanks, planes, and artillery already dehumanizes enemies effectively.

However, rather than impersonal killing, Japan's dehumanization of the Chinese was based on condescension. The Japanese public demeaned the Chinese since at least Japan's victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895.[107] The racist narrative focused on Japanese 'moral purity' and the Japanese position above other peoples.[108] The evidence for this alleged superiority over fellow Asians was Japan's remarkable crash-course modernization, which transformed the country into a powerful, modern state in only a few decades. The proof also lay in Japan's spectacular victories over China and Russia in 1895 and 1905. Since the Chinese were already disparaged by the twentieth century, the Japanese public easily believed in the righteousness of a cause that would put the Chinese and all other Asians into their "proper place" under the supposedly righteous and benevolent "Yamato Race."[109]

With the common view that Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria were vital to Japan (dating from at least 1930), and the media claiming that Asia had a proper place under the 'righteous' Japanese nation—and Tominaga having benefited from the acquisition of Manchuria—he likely believed that the Chinese were inferior to him and that their proper place was beneath him. This belief, rather than a predisposition towards killing, surely made it easier for Tominaga to cross the initial threshold of violence.

[107] Hayashi, "Battle of Singapore," section "The Rebuttal of the Defense."
[108] Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 204-205.
[109] Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 205-206.

In his account of the incident, Tominaga emphasized his fear of social disgrace as the primary factor contributing to his willingness to perform the decapitation. In feudal Japan, the rural hamlet developed a group consciousness that encouraged everyone to work together to survive.[110] According to Smethurst, the military established organizations to harness rural hamlets' cohesiveness, which resulted in nearly one hundred percent membership among those eligible. This system did not work as well in cities, where the conformist impulse was weakened by the urbanites' independence.[111] Tominaga spent at least some time in a city while attending college and he likely grew up in a city as well; he had no particular loyalty to the military as a rural recruit might have had. But the rural group consciousness still existed in the cities even if it was somewhat attenuated. The societal compulsion to meet expectations was what led Tominaga to murder, which is an apt description since there was no trial, as was required by international law. The compulsion is evident in his thoughts about completing his task successfully. Then, since he was desensitized, it was relatively easy for him to commit further violence when his social standing was at stake and when he viewed himself as above his victim. Such acts were not limited to killing captives and spies, but included plundering and burning houses for firewood, as Tominaga tells us.[112] Echoing the veteran officer, thereby confirming that acts of violence were believed to be courageous, he said, "Human beings were turned into

[110] Smethurst, *Social Basis*, 54.
[111] Smethurst, *Social Basis*, 55, 66-69.
[112] It should be noted that this kind of social pressure is easily imaginable in other societies, though in different formats. The form this compulsion took in Japan was related to the remnants of feudalism in rural Japanese communities harnessed by the Imperial military.

murdering demons…Men were able to fight courageously only when their human characteristics were suppressed. So we believed."[113]

In Tominaga's case there is one more point to consider. Tominaga Shozo was captured at the end of the war by the Soviet Union and eventually handed over to the People's Republic of China (PRC).[114] "It was eerie. The treatment we received [from the Chinese] was so polite…Maybe they were going to treat us gently, then kill us suddenly," Tominaga thought.[115] During his captivity, he learned that the Chinese were not inferior and that he had victimized them and needed to take responsibility for his crimes. He remembered that when his guards threw him into solitary confinement for being "insincere" during his enforced self-criticism,[116] he saw the anti-Japanese graffiti scrawled on the walls by the Chinese inmates the Japanese imprisoned there during the war.

> They'd [the graffiti] been written in desperate, hopeless defiance by prisoners just before being killed. For the first time, I understood the mind of those prisoners. Up to that moment, I'd excused myself from responsibility on the grounds that I was myself ordered to commit such acts…From the point of view of those murdered…it didn't matter whether the act of killing was a voluntary one or done under orders.[117]

In other words, Tominaga was forced to empathize with his victims. It was the exact opposite of the dehumanization that made it easier to commit crimes. This led

[113] Tominaga, "Qualifying as a Leader," 43.
[114] Shozo Tominaga, "Homecoming," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 462-468.
[115] Tominaga, "Homecoming,"463.
[116] Self-criticism was a common practice in Maoist China, where the perpetrator of some misdeed reflected on their behavior and were forced to acknowledge their wrongs.
[117] Tominaga, "Homecoming," 466.

him to take responsibility in his own mind for his actions. He was sent to China from the Soviet Union in 1950 and was released in 1957.

Desperate Times and Desperate Violence

Nogi Harumichi was a student in 1940, and one of his professors riled up the students with emotional anti-imperialist rhetoric.[118] As a result, Nogi and his classmates all said they would go to fight in China. He deeply supported Japan's invasion of Manchuria, seeing China as weak and unable to defend itself against Western imperialism. Therefore, he reasoned, it was Japan's job to improve China, to help the "backward races."[119] Strengthening Asia was what he thought Japan was doing in Manchuria and what he considered the war in China to be concerned with.

He believed thoroughly in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and became involved in an anti-imperialist group that worked for the independence of the Dutch East Indies. "Indonesian independence? That sounded exciting. Even thrilling," Nogi said about his attitude at that time.[120] Eventually, he joined the Navy, thinking that the Japanese military would liberate the East Indies and develop the country's natural resources. It was the same feeling he had about the invasion of Manchuria; it was not imperialism, but a liberation of the oppressed peoples of Asia. He had doubts, but "I believed that these thoughts surfaced in my mind because I was lacking in

[118] Harumichi Nogi, "'I Wanted to Build Greater East Asia,'" *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 50-55.
[119] Nogi, "'I Wanted to Build Greater East Asia,'" 51.
[120] Nogi, "'I Wanted to Build Greater East Asia,'" 52.

patriotic fervor and spirit. I felt I must drive myself forward."[121] So, he suppressed his doubts and did not give up his dreams of Asian 'liberation.'

He was sent to Celebes, an island in the Dutch East Indies in 1942.[122] "I was overjoyed with the idea of finally going to the scene of my dreams," Nogi said, expressing his excitement regarding Asian liberation.[123] He noted that the Japanese did not take anything from the local people, but commandeered only Dutch buildings and supplies. He did not consider it stealing, since it all belonged to oppressors, even though the Japanese took the belongings of Dutch civilians as well as those of the Dutch military and government. Initially, the Indonesians regarded the invading Japanese as liberators: "Village chiefs welcomed me…They waved the Sun flag and the Indonesian flag, too. I felt we were doing something wonderful there."[124]

But Nogi came to believe that they had driven out the hated colonial regime only to replace it. Nogi's convictions began to change when the Japanese authorities demanded rice from Celebes' inhabitants. The situation got out of hand, and the Japanese soldiers took the rice by force. After that, Nogi noted a subtle change in the way the locals treated him—he no longer felt as welcome as before. Nogi worked briefly as an interpreter for the Tokkeitai, or the Imperial Navy's police.[125] However, he told the Tokkei he was not qualified once he realized that the victims were often innocent. He did not have the courage to complain about their treatment, since his

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[121] Nogi, "'I Wanted to Build Greater East Asia,'" 54.
[122] Harumichi Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 105-113. Celebes is modern-day Sulawesi.
[123] Nogi, "'I Wanted to Build Greater East Asia,'" 55.
[124] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 107.
[125] "Tokkei" refers to an individual officer, while "Tokkeitai" refers to the organization.

superiors were "deadly serious."[126] The Japanese officials were corrupt, crushing opposition and spending money on themselves.

He was thoroughly disillusioned by the time he requested a transfer to the front lines in the late years of the war. He had begun to wonder why he was in administration when he was not a civilian, and so no longer wished to serve in the administration. He had come to think of himself and the military administration as another set of imperialists. They had even banned nationalist groups and the singing of the Indonesian independence anthem. He was sent as a Tokkei officer to Ambon Island, even though he knew nothing about law. Ambon was nearly on the front lines as the Americans advanced in the South Pacific.

While there, Nogi observed the Japanese becoming increasingly aggressive and violent. He remembered one incident when he attempted to investigate a suspected murder, but was told that the case was closed since "A battle of annihilation is imminent. If we punish this man, we'll be reducing the fighting strength of Japan!"[127] Nogi was then threatened with a transfer to an anti-aircraft unit, which would be a death sentence since American planes targeted the anti-aircraft guns with "an avalanche of bombs."[128] Having been threatened with death, Nogi stopped investigating crimes altogether.

Ultimately, the threat against his life crushed the last shreds of Nogi's idealism. He had truly believed in Japan's alleged mission to free Asia from

[126] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 108.
[127] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 110.
[128] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 110.

imperialism, despite the contradictions in the concept. However, his enthusiasm faded when his fellow Japanese began to suppress dissent and appropriate resources—which he associated with imperialism. When he realized he was complicit in the suppression, he abandoned it even if he could not bring himself to protest it.

This is related to the ideas of 'proper place' and Japanese 'purity' discussed earlier. Tominaga was likely affected by propaganda that lowered his inhibitions against killing. But Nogi was an administrator before being sent to Ambon, and he believed in Asian liberation even if it was clothed in Japanese chauvinism and sometimes elicited Nogi's doubt. Indeed, the Co-Prosperity Sphere he helped implement was intended to create an autarkic bloc for the Japanese nation, with each country serving in its so-called proper place. This was official long term policy, and it was to be implemented by transplanting pure Japanese communities to foreign soil to oversee the 'benevolent' subjugation of the occupied territories.[129] The short term goal was to win the war and create the first stages of autarky. Therefore, Nogi claimed to have been relatively unaffected by discriminatory condescension, but was part of an institutional system that carried out officially-sanctioned discrimination, which crushed his idealism.

Nogi admitted to committing murders on Ambon. He mentioned that local people were arrested and sometimes killed for spreading 'rumors' that Japan was losing the war. He did not claim to have directly executed anyone initially, and very possibly did not, but it is clear from both his testimony and his rank as the

[129] Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 263, 274-275.

commanding officer of the Tokkei on Ambon that he was complicit in the executions. Still, they never allowed the locals to witness their crimes, for fear that they might revolt if they knew too much.

The murders Nogi claimed to have committed were the executions of three captured American pilots. Nogi described his thought process:

> The order came down, 'Process them.' …Because I'd studied some law, I knew international regulations. But every day, those two-engine Lockheeds [American fighter planes] would come and run wild…All our planes had been destroyed. We could offer no resistance. We were frustrated and enraged…'It's illegal,' I thought, 'but the only choice for Japan is total annihilation or victory.[130]

He admitted to wanting to kill them, thinking he could not forgive them. He rationalized it, saying they could not do nothing and that he would probably be dead before he could be tried for the offense.

His soldiers brought the pilots to the grave. They all watched Nogi as he went to execute them. Like Tominaga, he felt self-conscious and feared floundering in front of his men. "I announced: 'You have been sentenced to death.' They asked 'Why?' If I'd listened to them, my own spirit would have been dulled, so holding my sword, I made them kneel down."[131] He mentioned that he thought the order to kill the pilots was to erase the evidence of Japan's dire war situation.

In contrast to Tominaga, Nogi was at the front in the final, brutal, nerve-wracking years of war. It is not surprising that this is when he committed atrocities. The Imperial military was collapsing, which allowed the American Army Air Force to

[130] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 110.
[131] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 111.

bomb with impunity. This frustrated the garrison on Ambon. Moreover, the Tokkei were suppressing any hint that the Japanese were losing the war to keep the population under control, despite the evidence to the contrary that flew overhead every day. In short, the pressure of the aerial bombardment and the possibility of a native revolt greatly pressured the occupiers. This induced Nogi to carry out his orders to kill the prisoners. Tominaga was under no such stress or fear, but seems to have been motivated primarily by a desire to conform to his unit's expectations.

It seems that the group mentality that influenced Tominaga was less influential on Nogi. The theory could explain why he did not protest the oppression of the Tokkei, but fear is a more likely motivator. His superiors were "deadly serious," and so he did not speak out against their unjust arrests, but he evidently was not compelled to continue following orders as one might expect of a conformist. Later, when he suspected that a death was a murder, he only stopped investigating when he was threatened with a dangerous assignment, though it was obvious that a murder had occurred. Again, he let the situation rest because of fear, not societal compulsion. However, about the execution of the pilots, he said, "Saying this today, I feel ashamed. I had a strange vanity…If I didn't make a good show of it, I'd be a laughingstock. If I analyze my psychology today, I would say I killed them because of that."[132] Only when he was very tense did group mentality push him over the threshold of violence.

Like Tominaga, Nogi came to terms with his wartime actions, but he faced Western rather than Chinese justice. The range of opinions among observers about the

[132] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 111.

International Military Tribunal for the Far East is expansive. Many Japanese feel that the trials, also known as the Tokyo Trials, perpetrated victors' justice.[133] Some claim the tribunal was too lenient, pointing out that many alleged war criminals were never indicted. Nogi mentioned that though his friends think he was a victim of the trials, and he received a pension from the Japanese government for his time in prison, he believed that the trials held Japan accountable for its actions in a "dirty" war.[134] He even conjectured that without a prison sentence, he might have become a corrupt politician, hiding his past.

A "Civilian" Employee

His Korean name was I Gil, but when he was interviewed, he introduced himself as Kasayama Yoshikichi, the name given to him as part of a colonial policy of Japanization.[135] He joined the Imperial Army because he figured he would be conscripted or abducted for service anyway. Though he seems to have volunteered without overt coercion, he stated that the neighborhood associations, which the colonial government used to control people, would threaten to cut rations to families that refused to send their sons into the service. He thought he might be shipped to the East Indies so he refreshed his English and learned some Indonesian on the voyage. However, an officer "beat me up to teach me I was a dumb bastard with 'Western thoughts.'"[136] The abuse did not stop him from practicing.

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[133] Interestingly, part of his penitence was digging up and washing the bones of his victims.
[134] Nogi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," 112-113.
[135] Yoshikichi Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 113-120.
[136] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 114.

He was stationed on Haruku Island as a POW guard with other Koreans under a Japanese officer. Being a guard was a typical assignment for Koreans working as 'civilians' for the Japanese. The officers frequently reminded the Koreans that their orders were considered to come from the Emperor himself and were thus absolute. It is difficult to tell if Kasayama cared about following the Emperor, but the practical need to follow orders to avoid punishment was unchanged regardless of personal belief.

Kasayama was in charge of loaning the POWs out to build an airfield, and he admitted, "Sure, we beat and kicked prisoners in order to make them work. But their principle was to work as little as possible."[137] To keep the men working, the guards 'prodded' them. The captives sometimes stole or hid things, which also frustrated the guards. Such theft was perhaps a form of resistance, though a tool could have simply been lost or broken in the course of the work. Since the construction unit treated their tools like "weapon[s] bestowed directly by His Imperial Highness," the POWs could expect a serious reprimand if one went missing.[138]

The prisoners were given no medicine and inadequate food. Dysentery was a death sentence because there was neither food nor medicine to nurse the sick back to health. According to Kasayama, "They'd [the POWs] get really thin. Their lips would get completely dry. Their eyesight blurred. The prisoners made a kind of eyeglasses out of colored gelatin paper to shade their eyes from the sun."[139] The POW doctors were usually allowed to decide who was too sick to work. However, sometimes

[137] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 115.
[138] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 116.
[139] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 116.

Japanese doctors came to Haruku and forced stronger patients to work when the number of laborers was too few. Though Kasayama does not mention the impact this had on the POWs, it is likely the same as on the Thailand-Burma Railway, where the men were forced to work before they convalesced and thus became sicker. The soil on Haruku was too sandy for burial, "So we put up a hut, called Rest in Peace…When you put several hundred corpses in one place, the whole island reeks with the smell of rotting bodies, the stink of death."[140] Non-commissioned officer prisoners and the enlisted captives were the primary victims, since the commissioned officer POWs were allowed to opt out of the work.

All the POWs and Korean guards on Haruku were paid, but they were only paid in military scrip, and most of the POWs' money was withheld in mandatory savings. The Japanese required that most of the guards' money be sent to their families in Korea. The Japanese officers did not want POWs or guards with too much money: "If you gave the money to them [the POWs] all at once, they'd use it to escape, so we made them save…they [the Japanese] didn't want us [the guards] to have much either," Kasayama related.[141]

The airfield was never completed. Kasayama had heard that Haruku was going to be a staging point for attacks against Australia, but the Allied offensive in New Guinea probably made these plans moot. The whole unit and its prisoners were ordered to travel to Java. The voyage was fraught with peril: Kasayama said their transport ship was bombed by Allied fighters and a few prisoners and guards died.

[140] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 117.
[141] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 116.

They were obliged to sneak along coasts in their dilapidated ship. Most of the passengers were malnourished and had beriberi. Describing the grim scene, Kasayama said,

> Of course, lots of prisoners died of illness…We buried them at sea—attached sand bags to their legs…and lowered them into the water…but several days later gases come out of the body, the stomach fills, and it bobs to the surface…and you have to attach another sandbag to make it sink out of sight again.[142]

The decomposing bodies polluted the water near the ship, but it was needed to cook rice, so the passengers used it anyway. Kasayama estimated that nearly 1200 POWs died travelling to Surabaya. He did not mention how many Koreans or Japanese died during the trip. Possibly, only a few Army personnel died, in which case one might assume that the POWs were forced into awful conditions on the ship and their food was primarily given to the Japanese. It is also possible that Kasayama did not mention the deaths of personnel, perhaps because his interviewers were not interested or because he did not consider it relevant to the discussion.

The brutal conditions for prisoners on Haruku must be viewed from Kasayama's position in a wider context. His abuse of prisoners who did not work or who disobeyed rules was a symptom of the Army's training process and internal hierarchy. As a low-ranking recruit his instructors would have abused him, and as a Korean most Japanese would have abused him. The Japanese held him in contempt because of both his rank and his nationality.

[142] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 119.

It was common practice in training to slap recruits and break them down. Basic training's purpose in any military is to break down recruits so they can be molded into proper soldiers who obey orders. However, the Japanese Army used physical abuse during and after training, which guards passed along unthinkingly to their charges, particularly if the guards were frustrated or felt helpless.[143] They sought control over something, and rarely knew it was a crime. As Tanaka points out, the Korean guards were actually encouraged to beat their charges to establish dominance and authority and to remove their respect for white men, who were their prisoners. They were not taught the Geneva Convention, which Japan had agreed to follow, but learned the soldier's Field Code instead.[144] In other words, the guards were trained as infantry soldiers rather than as guards who were expected by international law and convention to treat prisoners by certain standards.

Therefore, the violence and racism directed against Kasayama as an 'inferior' to his Japanese commanders frustrated him. He took this frustration out on the only people he controlled: the captives. As always, orders encouraged him to force the POWs to work regardless of how he extracted compliance. There was no oversight authority on Haruku that tried to care for the prisoners, which was a symptom of the Japanese government's decision to make no effort to follow international law in the war (despite their statement to the contrary). Kasayama's violence and discrimination against the prisoners was rooted in institutional racism and violence, along with ignorance of international law.

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[143] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors, 40.*
[144] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors,* 39.

As for food and medicine, Kasayama claimed that the POWs received the same rations as the guards and the officers, saying "Demands for food…came from the prisoners, but we didn't have any 'main course' either…Our superiors were in the same shape. There was nothing to eat and nothing to give."[145] Surely, the American submarine warfare campaign's success would have made food and medicine harder to obtain as the war progressed. Kasayama noted that an Allied submarine sunk a shipment of medicine and that sometimes the whole camp relied on only 1500 calories of food per person per day. However, he admitted that regulations stated the Japanese were to be fed first, followed by locals, with POWs receiving only the leftovers. So if food supplies fell too far, the commandant may have cut food to the prisoners, and a guard like Kasayama would have no official say in the matter. The same applies to the deaths of the prisoners on the voyage back to Surabaya. By the end of the war, there was no food for anyone on Haruku according to Kasayama's testimony.

Though these are institutional factors that were beyond Kasayama's control, there was almost certainly discrimination that contributed to the prisoners' high death rate. Even if the guards fed them the same as the Army personnel, as Kasayama claimed, the captives were likely overworked or placed in crowded housing that exposed them to disease and the weather. These factors would be manifestations of racism and ignorance of international law that increased Kasayama's disregard for POWs. While the dehumanization instilled in Kasayama made it easier to kill or abuse, his testimony also illuminates how his mindset may have led to negligence and

[145] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 116.

indifference toward the captives, worsening their plight. There is no hard evidence to say that he was personally negligent, but his narrative gives little impression that he cared about the captured Allied men's unenviable position, as seen in his remarks about beating the POWs and feeding them. Due to instilled racism and ignorance of the international law, he evidently saw no reason to suppose that they should be treated better.

Kasayama's next posting was in Bandung, Java, which had excellent facilities and plenty of food. The relatively good conditions afforded him and his comrades ample opportunity for "whoring and drinking."[146] They bought watches and other objects from the captives to sell on the black market to live more fully. Kasayama did not write home, figuring that the censors would blot out anything he really wished to say. In reference to these activities, he said, "If you're gonna die, what difference does it make? We abandoned thoughts of going home."[147] He seemed hopeless, and this can be attributed to the worsening war situation. Large American air raids were striking Bandung, and the Japanese were even worried that the Koreans would rebel. Kasayama confirmed that some of his fellow Koreans were increasingly restive. Shots were exchanged between Korean workers and Japanese soldiers on one occasion, and he remembered beating up a Japanese soldier in a bathroom. Kasayama summed up the Korean attitude of the time: "'Do you think we're going to let you shit on us till we die?' we demanded…we had rifles now, too…the Japanese apologized and groveled

[146] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 119.
[147] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 119.

when they didn't have rifles."[148] The Japanese were losing control of the situation, even though conditions in Bandung were better than on Haruku.

At least for the prisoners, the difference between Haruku and Bandung was one of supply. Kasayama mentioned no abuse against the POWs after they arrived at Bandung, though some probably occurred. There seems to have been few deaths, which can be attributed to the plentiful supply of food and medicine. While poor housing, overwork, and physical abuse were likely still common, if the Japanese could keep their captive workforce healthy, it was in their interest to do so. With food and medicine in abundance, the prisoners survived whatever unnamed conditions existed in Bandung.

Kasayama was both a victim and a perpetrator of war crimes. He was a Korean 'volunteer' who was brutalized and trained to brutalize others. He was ultimately tried as a war criminal, in his opinion, because he knew English and was used to pass orders along to the captives. He suspected that the POWs thought that "fifty out of a hundred orders were mine."[149] He wondered if it would have been better if he had not studied English, which he learned because his grandfather ran an antique shop in Seoul for tourists. If Kasayama had not studied English, the captives may not have blamed him for their position, he reasoned.

It is not often considered that those who committed crimes were also victims, but in the Kasayama's case, this dynamic was pronounced due to the Japanese's assertion that Koreans were inferior to them. The Korean guards who beat prisoners

[148] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 120.
[149] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 117.

and worked them to sickness and death were themselves beaten and abused by their Japanese superiors. Officers also frequently beat enlisted Japanese soldiers and told them their lives were worth less than their weapons. In such toxic environments, the victims passed the violence on to create a new victim when they had power over others.[150]

Of Haruku, Kasayama related, "Unlucky captives like ours had been sent to a terrible place. Lucky ones were left in the middle of cities with good facilities…You can even say the same thing about the guards," revealing that he truly believed the guards and the POWs were in similar situations.[151] But he was also a victimizer and was tried by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, convicted, and paroled in 1955. Yet he did not seem to have come to terms with his actions. This is evident because he emphasized the suffering of everyone over just the captives, who died at a much higher rate than Army personnel. He also claimed the POWs were lazy, justifying the abuse.

The Ethics of Medical Care

Yuasa Ken became a certified doctor in March 1941 and joined the Imperial Army in December.[152] He was sent to a hospital in Shanxi, and quickly became involved in an "operation exercise:" the vivisection of a human patient.[153] When he heard about the planned vivisection, he was horrified. He arrived at the operating room to find

[150] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors, 40.*
[151] Kasayama, "'Korean Guard,'" 117.
[152] Ken Yuasa, "Army Doctor," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 145-151.
[153] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 146.

nearly 100 nurses, doctors, technicians, and guards and two Chinese prisoners. Yuasa recalled that one Chinese was a stoic communist and the other was a farmer who looked "as if he had just been dragged in from his field. His eyes raced desperately around the room."[154] Yuasa recalls that it felt just like any other operation, not ghastly like one might expect. A self-identified yes-man, he figured there must be some purpose to killing the Chinese. He asked, and someone stated that they would kill the whole Red Army. Yuasa asked no more questions.

The nurses were all smiling. The communist lay down without a fight, since "He had come prepared to die, confident in China's ultimate victory…over a cruel, unjust Japan…I didn't see that back then."[155] The farmer attempted to flee. The guard was not fast enough to stop him, but Yuasa was. He recalled: "I was very conscious of my dignity as a military man. The hospital director was watching. I never thought…what will happen to his family? All I thought was, it would be terribly embarrassing if I end up in a brawl, [with] this man in farmer's rags and me dressed so correctly."[156] So Yuasa pushed the farmer and ordered him to the operating table. Yuasa was proud of himself, but not so much as the nurse who soothed the farmer and calmed him down was proud of herself. Yuasa recalled that she giggled. "The demon's face is not a fearful face. It's a face wreathed in smiles," he mused years later, reflecting on how nice the nurse looked despite the plans the Japanese had for the prisoners.[157]

[154] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 146.
[155] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 147.
[156] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 147.
[157] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 147.

After administering chloroform, and holding the farmer down while it put him to sleep, the doctors removed appendixes, amputated arms, and cut and sewed up the intestines of their two patients. At the end of the vivisection, the farmer, who Yuasa had worked on, was dead, but the communist was stubbornly alive. They injected air into his heart, strangled him with wire, but finally they murdered him with a shot of anesthesia and buried him behind the building.

Yuasa, like Tominaga and Nogi, overcame his initial horror due to pride and conformist impulse. When the terrified farmer attempted to escape, Yuasa feared embarrassment, thinking only of avoiding shaming himself in front of his boss. Indeed, he felt glad he sent the farmer to the operating table in a dignified manner, suitable to his perception of his social rank.

It was easy for him to rationalize the unethical medical procedures. His conscious considerations were twofold. He had faith that his superiors would not perform the operation without good reason, even when the doctors' callousness was revealed through the statement that they would kill all the communists. But the convincing rationalization was the practical use of operating on captured Chinese soldiers and civilians: it taught Japanese medical personnel how to perform appendectomies, amputations, and other surgeries on Japanese soldiers. Yuasa said medical training was the reason for the vivisections, and Tanka argues that the doctors fundamentally viewed their conduct as a tradeoff between 'lesser' lives—Chinese—

and 'greater' lives—Japanese.[158] The pervasive racism against the Chinese is once more revealed.

Similar to Tominaga, once Yuasa crossed the threshold of violence by rationalization and fear of social disgrace, it seems Yuasa had few qualms about murdering again. In all, Yuasa recalled participating in ten practice surgeries, including one in 1942 where they shot Chinese prisoners in the stomach four or five times to see if they could save the men from the typically mortal wounds. The operation was a failure. Yuasa began to swear by these procedures, saying once that as the war went on, and the quality of their medical staff deteriorated, they should practice on live subjects six times a year. He came to believe that it was patriotic, done in service to his country so they could win the war. He thought he would do anything—even biological warfare—if it meant winning the war.

Yuasa had a vested interest in continuing the operations. The operations were part of being a doctor, and his position as a doctor gave him power and status. Everyone saluted him because he was an officer, women called him "Honorable Military Doctor," and he had access to anything he wanted, including alcohol. Everyone was terrified of him because he could send them to the front while he could stay safely in the rear echelons.[159] "I felt I ruled the whole country."[160] Having crossed the threshold of violence, and with his ego being fed by the power his job gave him, he had no reason to step down or protest the vivisections.

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[158] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 163.
[159] Yuasa, "Army Doctor,"149.
[160] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 149.

After the war, he was pressed into service for the Chinese Nationalists and was captured by Mao's forces and imprisoned in Taiyuan. It took four years to recall the crimes he had committed and confess them. Yuasa was released in 1956 and returned to Japan, where he claimed his colleagues suffered from collective amnesia: "Most doctors did that [the operations]…all over China. Yet all keep quiet! ...At that time, we were doing something good. That's what we let ourselves believe…It was 'because of the war.' That's good enough for them."[161]

Working with "Logs"

"I don't want to recall what I did…I feel I have to say war is a dirty thing…I am a war criminal because of the things I actually did. Not in theory," Tamura Yoshio lamented during his interview.[162] His parents did not approve of him joining the Japanese Army, but he convinced them.[163] He dropped out of middle school and trained in Tokyo for a month in bacteriological research and Chinese. In May 1939, command assigned him as a civilian contractor to the now-infamous Unit 731 near Harbin. In 1932, following the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Lieutenant General Ishii Shiro established a research laboratory there that evolved into Unit 731.[164] Ishii knew of the international prohibition against biological weapons research and use, but felt that the potential was too great to ignore. [165] Combat units began to use the

[161] Yuasa, "Army Doctor," 151.
[162] Yoshio Tamura, "Unit 731," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 159.
[163] Tamura, "Unit 731," 158-167.
[164] It was also called the Ishii Unit.
[165] Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 7-8, 13-14.

weapons extensively in China in 1940 and some of the General Staff wanted to deploy biological agents against the western Allies as well, though this never occurred.[166]

The Kenpeitai swore Tamura to secrecy about everything he saw at the research compound, threatening him with prosecution under the Military Secrets Protection Law if he should leak any details. The Military Penal Code promised execution if he ever left his post without permission. These laws bound Tamura to an unethical job he did not chose. He had no leeway to abide by his conscience, but would face death if he protested anything that occurred within the unit. Still, the treatment of the nearby Chinese villagers, who were imprisoned and used for labor, did not shock him.

After being threatened, he was eased into the work, starting with tests on rabbits. This was what first horrified him. "They were given injections and they had seizures. We were told not to look away from those rabbits… [That] was the first step. Gradually, we came not to think anything of it, even when conducting experiments on human beings."[167] When the rabbits died, they were dissected. Eventually, the recruits did the work themselves. Eventually, the recruits would do the same procedures on humans, which was central to Unit 731's work. Tamura specialized in rats and mice. He worked under the supervision of prestigious scholars to determine what diseases killed the animals and how quickly.

Even in this covert unit, the military hierarchy loomed. The supervising scientists were engaged in oversight and data compilation, while the young recruits handled the infected animals. A scratch could kill them; in their first year, two of Tamura's

[166] Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 137-138.
[167] Tamura, "Unit 731," 161.

colleagues succumbed to the diseases they handled. The sick could not be sent to a hospital due to contagion containment procedures. Tamura never knew whether these men were treated at all, but once they neared death, they became part of the experiments: "We were all experimental material," he said.[168] Tamura then had clearance to see the human experiments, which were shrouded in secrecy. "Even for people who had already lost their humanity" due to two years of desensitizing experiments on animals, "it [human testing] was ghastly to see."[169]

The doctors used euphemisms to distance their minds from the reality of their actions. They referred to their victims as "maruta," which translates to "log." The euphemism's importance comes from the scientists' power over the human test subjects. The scientists defined the Chinese captives as sub-human, and from there it was not a great leap to treating them so.[170] Defining the Chinese prisoners as inanimate objects made them seem as inconsequential as the rabbits Tamura had experimented on before. The Nazis used similar euphemisms in the death camps, referring to their victims as "pieces of prisoner," "loads," and "consignments."[171]

Even though Tamura found the human experiment laboratory horrifying, he had no pity for the subjects. Years of experiments, euphemism, and a regimen of racist indoctrination desensitized him to the sterilized violence. Tamura later emphasized the effect that racism had on him and his colleagues, saying "If we didn't have a feeling of racial superiority, we couldn't have done it…That's why I'm afraid of the power of

[168] Tamura, "Unit 731," 166.
[169] Tamura, "Unit 731,"162.
[170] Haig Bosmajian, *The Language of Oppression* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1974), 5-6.
[171] Bosmajian, *Language of Oppression*, 30.

education. We, ourselves, had to struggle with our humanity afterwards. It was an agonizing process. There were some who killed themselves, unable to endure. After the defeat."[172] Tamura connected the racism they had with indoctrination carried out in Japan, as Dower argued in *War Without Mercy*.

Interestingly, Unit 731's Chinese prisoners were treated far better than the other prisoners discussed. But this had nothing to do with kindness. Tamura said he hated them, and they hated the Japanese, calling them "Jih-pen kuei-tzu! Japanese devil!"[173] Healthy captives were necessary for their experiments. So they were treated exceptionally well, even getting better food than the Japanese. In resistance, many prisoners refused to eat.

Tamura left Unit 731 through official channels once one of his friends was infected. This friend was experimented on, which likely means that he was dissected after his death. He was given a hero's funeral and his ashes were sent home. Tamura found himself unable to accept the treatment of his friend "I was shocked, but I didn't dare discuss it with the others…I would probably have been accused under the Military Secrets Law," he later said.[174] He enlisted as a regular soldier in 1943 and was stationed in Manchukuo until the end of the war in the medical service, never facing the violence and danger of the front line.

Tamura did not seem to be given a choice in his work. He either did his work or he was punished with death. This certainly contributed to his thinking. Even after

[172] Tamura, "Unit 731,"164.
[173] Tamura, "Unit 731," 164.
[174] Tamura, "Unit 731," 166.

he left Unit 731, he wanted to escape his situation. "I never fought with a gun. I was never subjected to an air raid. That kind of war I didn't fight…I was always trying to get out, but never could."[175] Still, he never questioned what he was doing and never wondered what it meant. He said they "drifted" through life for two years, acting like soldiers even before they enlisted.[176] Thus, even when he theoretically had a choice—to join the unit permanently or not—Tamura chose to continue his work. It should be remembered that only after he joined as a permanent member was he given clearance to observe and participate in the human experiments. Despite the coercion he experienced, the brutalization inflicted upon him through unethical experiments on animals, an ideological regimen in racism and anti-communism,[177] and the use of euphemism were more important in shaping Tamura's actions.

Tamura's experience does not fit the threshold of violence concept, since he did not face a single moment of decision between crime and innocence, but was desensitized solely to inflict disease. Conformity does not seem to have been a factor, for he never reported a fear of failure or shame. He never experienced the stress and danger of battle, like Nogi encountered. According to Tamura, the biggest contributors to his crimes during the war were dehumanization of the enemy and a lack of strong moral conviction against his orders.

Many members of Unit 731 were never brought to court because the United States gave them immunity in exchange for their data, though a handful were tried by

[175] Tamura, "Unit 731," 166.
[176] Tamura, "Unit 731," 162.
[177] Communism was associated with the prisoners they experimented on.

the Soviets and the Chinese. The Chinese indicted Tamura, but unlike Yuasa and Tominaga, it is more likely that Tamura was captured and tried by the nationalists rather than the communists, though he does not mention who convicted him.

The Business of Intelligence

Uno Shintaro was born in the Japanese concession in Tianjin, China.[178] A Chinese nurse raised him until he joined the Imperial Army. He passed the reserve officer exam, graduated from officer training school, and became an intelligence agent with the Kenpeitai in China. He actually had no training in gathering information since no such training existed. He learned through experience there were four ways to collect intelligence: scouting, intercepting radio transmissions, hiring spies, and interrogating and torturing prisoners.

Uno maintained that torture was the most effective technique. "They [POWs] don't say anything if you don't ask. Even threatened, they often didn't speak. If you torture them, some will talk. Others won't. Torture was an unavoidable necessity. Murdering and burying them follows naturally. You do it so you won't be found out."[179] The officers demanded information to make battlefield decisions, and Uno had to deliver. He hardly slept due to the difficulty in gathering information for punitive operations. So he used torture frequently to extract intelligence. He also used spies in gathering reports on enemy activity, paying them in opium. He recruited the social outcasts of Chinese society, especially gangsters. "We'd find them and train them, threaten them,

[178] Shintaro Uno, "Spies and Bandits," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 151-157.
[179] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 153.

cajole them…We'd then bring out the opium. 'I'll do it!' they'd say…"[180] If they betrayed China, they would get rich. If they betrayed the Japanese, then they would die.

Uno did not recount his first experience with torture and murder, but it is likely that the need for information pushed him toward violence. He was convinced this was his duty, and his job with the Kenpeitai was fulfilling; he was a valuable part of military operations in China. He determined what was true and what was misdirection. "I was sure this was my purpose for living. I believed and acted in this way because I was convinced of what I was doing. We carried out our duty as instructed by our masters. We did it for the sake of our country. From our filial obligation to our ancestors," Uno explained. However, as with Tominaga and Nogi, he talked about the pressure to perform during executions. Just as Tominaga was told he must kill to lead, Uno claimed that the enlisted men called any officer who did not execute "nothing but appearances…spineless."[181] To avoid social disgrace—to conform—they had to kill. It was an extreme case of peer pressure.

Uno also believed the Chinese were inferior. He said that he had not considered the Chinese to even be human. "When you're winning, the losers look really miserable. We concluded that the Yamato race was superior."[182] This is especially interesting considering that a Chinese nurse helped raise him. Such an experience could have caused him to have more empathy with the Chinese. Their

[180] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 153.
[181] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 156.
[182] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 156.

relationship was evidently fairly intimate, considering the fact that the nurse cried when he went to join the war and asked him why he joined the military. Only poor men joined the Chinese army, she said. However, it seems likely that being in the Japanese concession in Tianjin still surrounded him with enough racist indoctrination that the empathy he might have developed from his contact with the nurse was mitigated.

Therefore, believing it a necessity of his duty, and seeing the Chinese as sub-human, it was not difficult for Uno to kill. It was actually easy, Uno said. For instance, he was once accused of negligence because there were Chinese resisting in an area he was responsible for. So he gathered nine Chinese men and beheaded them all. He was quite calm afterwards and went out for a drink. Uno even confessed that killing became a drug to him. If he did not kill once every two weeks, he felt odd. "[Sukesada] was the best sword for murder. With Sadamitsu,[183] you couldn't really take a head with a single stroke…Heads fell easily to Sukesada.[184] …Looking at that, I felt ecstasy. I'm not that way today."[185] Killing was not only easy, but during the war, it was desirable to him.

He found it easy to abuse the Chinese because he was taught from a young age to see them as inferior and himself as superior. His devotion to duty and his satisfaction with his job only reinforced this; he found that torture, murder, and bribing traitors with illicit drugs, all of which devalued Chinese life even more, were the best

[183] Sadamitsu was Uno's military-issue "Showa sword."
[184] Sukesada was Uno's family sword, a high quality blade.
[185] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 155.

ways to gather information. Eventually, he became addicted to killing, and he became callous to murdering Chinese POWs. His violence was partially institutional—a result of a need for intelligence—but became highly personal, as a means to a successful career and as a form of recreation.

Uno firmly believed in the war. He was certain the Army could not be defeated, despite knowing the Navy was losing. When his unit transferred to Manchukuo, he knew they would destroy the Soviet forces if they had to. The emperor would die with them instead of surrender, he thought. He cried when they burned the regimental flags, a symbol of their defeat. Uno was so distraught that he blew up his swords with high explosives.

The Soviet Union imprisoned Uno for five years before sending him to the PRC. The Chinese authorities had witnesses for everything, and Uno confessed to his crimes, but only to beheading six rather than nine on the one occasion. He felt could not admit to more. He was only given thirteen years and only served eight before he was released on parole. About this, he said, "I really believe the Chinese Communist Party were the ones who spared my life…they were different from America…who hanged one thousand sixty-eight."[186] Still, he regretted what he did and believed the addiction to killing resided in him.

Deadly Retreat

[186] Uno, "Spies and Bandits," 151.

Ogawa Tamotsu served on the front lines for nearly six years, first in China, then in the South Pacific.[187] He quit school in his teens, certain he would join the Army, and so there was no point to excess education. "I was young and simpleminded. I really believed it was my duty to serve as a Japanese soldier—one of His Majesty's Children," Ogawa recalled, but he never considered that he might die in battle.[188]

He was tough and could escape the officers' notice, so he often avoided the customary beatings during training. His commander at the front was a relative. As a result, he had it easy there and even stayed behind on dangerous missions. Eventually he was transferred to a unit bound for New Britain, a small island in the South Pacific. The medical service offered him a job as an orderly, and he almost said no. He thought he could not work as an officer's "lackey."[189] He reconsidered due to the higher quality food he would receive, and embarked on a different ship than he would have been on otherwise. The first ship was sunk and nearly everyone on board died.

His unit arrived at Tsuburu, New Britain, and Ogawa became a medic in a field hospital. The Americans landed after Christmas, 1944, and routed his unit. Ogawa and his comrades marched haphazardly through the jungle, desperately trying to escape. They only moved at night for fear of Allied planes. Japanese soldiers stumbled along, suffering from malaria or dysentery. "Men killed in real combat are a very small part of those who die in war. Men died of starvation, all kinds of disease. They just fell out,

[187] Tamotsu Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 276-281.
[188] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 277.
[189] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 278.

one after another while on the run in the jungle…It was a hell march," Ogawa said.[190] The medics and doctors were forced to make difficult decisions: gangrene set in fast in the jungle, and there was no time for full anesthesia. Doctors performed amputations with only partial anesthesia. Then, with so many legless soldiers, the field hospital staff had to abandon them.

This difficult decision evolved into an infinitely worse one. His unit only had a handful of grenades and very little medicine. Both were used to kill those who could not continue.

> We were five or six medics with one to two hundred patients to care for. What could we do with those without arms or legs? Carry them on our backs? Left behind, they'd have been massacred by the natives…I became a murderer. I killed men who didn't resist, couldn't resist. I killed men who only sought medicine, comrades I was supposed to help. Naturally the fucking officers didn't do it themselves. They left it to the orderlies.[191]

It eventually became easier for him to kill, to the point where he did not cry anymore. But it did not stop torturing him. He suffered with the memory because he was killing comrades.

Ogawa is the only subject of this thesis to have Japanese victims. None of the others mentioned killing Japanese soldiers.[192] While the others may have beaten Japanese subordinates who were not POWs or civilians, that cannot be considered a crime because it was common practice in the Japanese Army. In the majority of the

[190] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 278.
[191] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 278-288.
[192] Tamura is one exception, but the point remains, since Unit 731 never killed Japanese soldiers in a systematic way like Ogawa's unit did.

murders analyzed, these perpetrators dehumanized their enemy so that even defenseless prisoners or civilians were 'valid' enemies. They were sometimes under orders or social expectation to kill. They were also sometimes frustrated and feeling helpless, leading to the abuse and execution of prisoners. However, Ogawa had not dehumanized his victims, nor were his actions born of frustrated malice. Instead, he murdered out of merciful hopelessness. He saw no alternative, knowing he could not bring so many injured men with him, but also believing that if he left them behind, the natives, who he called "the enemy's sharp stingers," would slaughter them.[193] He considered it only a matter of time before he died, too. Even when he was desensitized to the executions, they left an indelible mark in his mind. The interviewer wrote of the encounter, "His face contorts with pain; at times he breaks into uncontrollable sobs, or a wail of anguish escapes him."[194]

Though he seemed to believe that he made the only possible choice, and he remembered that this was the dominant factor, there was some social compulsion. Ogawa told of a shipwrecked sixteen-year-old who was pressed into service. The boy caught malaria, and Ogawa was ordered to give him a lethal injection. The medical officer watched Ogawa administer the shot, so he felt there was no escaping the situation. Ogawa felt he betrayed the boy, who had given him real tobacco when Ogawa was smoking ginger leaves.

Without supplies to care for the sick and injured, death was ubiquitous. The dead seemed to attract the dying, Ogawa mentioned. They gathered in clumps, with

[193] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 278.
[194] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 277.

skeletons in the center, bloated and decomposing bodies around them, and a third ring of pitiable dying men lay around the outside. The bodies congregated in abandoned huts, and Ogawa vividly remembered the worms: "White worms covered the bodies. Millions of worms in human shapes, rustling just like reeds…When we heard worms rustling in the dark…there were dead men nearby."[195] Given the deep sense of despair and helplessness, and the pervasive presence of death, it is not surprising that Ogawa hated the Americans, though he later attributed this hatred to brainwashing.

When the war ended, Ogawa was elated, even laughing. He had survived, and he got satisfaction from that fact. Later, Ogawa blamed only one person for the war: the Showa emperor, who he believed was perfectly capable of preventing or ending the war. As for himself, he has not been able to lay his nightmarish memories to rest. Ogawa attributed all his crimes to his own hands. "Sometimes, though, it's all nothingness. I think to myself: I deserve a death sentence…these torments I have to bear until I die. My war will continue until that moment…I'm an atheist…I don't believe in God. I did it myself!"[196]

The Quandary of Construction

In September 1943, Tarumoto Juji, an officer of the 9th Railway Regiment, arrived at Chungkai Mountain to begin constructing the Thailand-Burma Railway.[197] After surveying the site, he was certain he could not meet his deadline in February with the men and tools he had available. The next day, sixty POWs arrived, escorted by one

[195] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 279.
[196] Ogawa, "Soldiers' Deaths," 281.
[197] Juji Tarumoto, "My Touchstone: the Chungkai Cutting," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 91-108.

guard, Sergeant Joutani. The POWs set up tents for themselves, and that night they sang and laughed. The Japanese soldiers watched them perform. The captives asked Tarumoto for permission to sing the British national anthem. Since Tarumoto reasoned that it was not his job to say 'no,' he did not object. The song was touching, and all the prisoners singing together "was a scene that would have made any human being sentimental and sympathetic. However, these human sentiments had to be actively discarded as we were on the battlefield…Man fluctuates between a god and a devil. What causes that fluctuation must be war," he reflected after many years.[198]

When work began, half the POWs went with Tarumoto to carve out the rail bed, and the other half went to build barracks for themselves. The camp administrator had ordered an ambitious POW camp, saying that they needed a proper shelter before the majority could be sent. "The opinion of the camp director…was correct, and I could not refute it, but I was really uneasy as my job had to be completed within a limited time," Tarumoto explained.[199]

The POW camp had only five administrators: Seargeant Joutani and four Korean guards. Joutani was constantly busy building the camp and supervising meals. Tarumoto was critical of the lack of prison staff, but he also needed the prisoners; they were a vital source of labor. A higher administrator lent the prisoners to the railway men for work. He issued regulations that soldiers were not to hit the POWs or keep them working after hours. Soldiers in the unit quietly griped, "When a Japanese soldier neglects his work, he is slapped. Why can we not slap a PoW? ...Did we come

[198] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 92.
[199] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 93.

here to build a railway or to learn how to treat PoWs?"[200] Generally, Tarumoto testified, the rules were followed despite the railway men's resentments.

Once, the regimental commander inspected the worksite. He asked Tarumoto if he would finish the construction on time. Tarumoto was unsure if he could— he needed more tools and supplies—but "I answered in the army style, stressing my will to perform. 'Yes, we can.'"[201] He felt ashamed that he had not completed more work, and resolved that he would have much more to flaunt at the next inspection. Shortly after this occurred, the POW camp was completed, and nearly 500 captives came to work on the railway.

The job continued in a crude fashion due to a lack of proper tools. Tarumoto's unit was not issued power tools and had few hand tools such as shovels, chisels, or drills. The only thing they did have abundantly was explosives. "Every time I saw boats at our pier I ran to them, but most of the cargoes were explosives. 'Explosives again!' Our men seemed disappointed and carried the cargo to our store-room."[202] The tools they had were shoddy, such as shovels that bent under too great a load.

Despite the influx of prisoners, the labor shortage continued, and the earthmoving POWs were evidently slacking off. Tarumoto's subordinates asked him to do something to speed them up. He spoke to the POW officer, who responded that his men did not have enough meat or vegetables. "When I go back to England I will beat my wife if she serves me rice," the officer said, emphasizing the monotony of the

[200] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 93.
[201] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 94.
[202] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 95.

rations.[203] Without decent food, they could not work harder. Tarumoto agreed with the officer, but he was also concerned that the unit would not complete their task. He seemed to believe they were trying to interfere with the work: "It was quite natural for the PoWs not to cooperate with the work of the Japanese army and to try to disrupt the work."[204] But he was not angry and tried to persuade the captives to work harder through speeches, but he gave up when they laughed at him. The tactic clearly did not work.

Hoping for results from the Allied soldiers, he adopted a quota of earth to be moved per day per prisoner. He requested that the POWs work on Sundays as well, like the Japanese did, but the captives vehemently rejected this proposal. In response, Tarumoto suggested a weekly quota, with a day off if the prisoners finished in time. The captives argued that the quota was too much, but Tarumoto suggested that the day off was an incentive for the POWs to work hard. After much discussion, the weekly quota was implemented.

Performance under this system was mixed. Some units finished the quota quickly while many had to work into the night on Sunday. Some men "were driven to despair, resulting in a low performance," so Tarumoto told them they could quit for the day.[205] He stipulated that their quota next week would be larger. Despite the problems, the results were generally good, and the system remained in place.

[203] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 104.
[204] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 104.
[205] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 105.

There was only one punishment Tarumoto claimed to have seen on the railway. A POW had "taken a hostile attitude, stamped on the shovel and broken the neck of its handle… [this] was [an offense] of a serious nature by our standards."[206] Such insubordination was not tolerated in the Imperial Army, and neither was the deliberate destruction of Army property. Knowing this, Tarumoto sympathized with the soldier who struck the POW. Tarumoto felt that this punishment was more effective than the administration's prescribed time in solitary confinement. Since the captive returned to work, Tarumoto concluded that the punishment was not excessive and did not discipline the railway man.

Power drills arrived in October, and Tarumoto reorganized the labor system. He asked for more POWs and established three seven hour shifts, which the captives liked. Still, there were not enough workers despite the new equipment. The prisoners' efficiency improved, but more and more of them became ill and stopped working. The doctors requested medicine and vegetables to treat beriberi, but the camp had none, and the staff's appeals to the administration for supplies bore no fruit. To maintain the captives' health, the camp restricted the work they did, which irritated the railway men who needed the labor to finish the railroad. Despite this, Tarumoto's unit completed the section of track on time in early February 1944.

The above account illustrates Tarumoto's attitude toward his work and the POWs. He was not belligerent or angry, and he pitied the prisoners because of the treatment they were accorded. He may also have pitied them because they were

[206] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 106.

British, not Chinese. As mentioned before, the Chinese in particular attracted the ire of the Japanese, while the British had been respected in the recent past. But regardless, the prisoners' well-being was not Tarumoto's highest priority. Repeatedly, Tarumoto stressed the need to complete the track, holding this desire in tension with an understanding that the POWs had to be cared for. For example, he knew that the captured soldiers needed better food, but he also wanted them to perform better. Rations never improved, but he enticed the prisoners to work hard with an incentive. When some were unable to complete their quota, he let them stop working, but stipulated that their quota would be increased next week. One must ask, if they had not finished the regular quota, could they be expected to work an increased quota? Perhaps Tarumoto realized this since he asked the POWs to give higher quotas to groups that finished faster. This suggestion was rejected as unfair.

To his credit, Tarumoto was relatively ethical in his treatment of the prisoners. He first tried to inspire them to work harder, then offered incentives to complete their required tasks. The POWs were not beaten. In some ways, the prisoners were treated better than the Japanese: they got Sundays off, though it was eventually contingent on the completion of their quota.

The issue was that the supply line could not provide the tools, food, medicine, or labor necessary to build the railway. For instance, there was plenty of rice, but little meat and few vegetables. Unlike the Japanese, the POWs could not stomach large amounts of rice. The captives were thus weak and unable to perform well. The vitamin-deficient diet led to a beriberi outbreak. Many POWs were bedridden, and

medicine was not available to cure the disease. But the healthy prisoners did not provide enough labor to make up for the shortage of tools, which led to harder work. The only explanation for these deficiencies is that the supplies were not available. Yet, transporting materials to Chungkai Mountain was apparently not a problem, given the overabundance of explosives.

There was severe institutional ambition as well. The Japanese military leadership wanted a railway despite the fact that the terrain had been rejected as too difficult by previous potential investors. The Imperial Army also wanted it built faster and at lower cost than could be safely accomplished. The attitude that project completion was paramount infected Tarumoto and many others on the railway. It was a social pressure similar to the expectations to kill that Uno, Nogi, and Tominaga experienced.

Still, the Allied prisoners did not suffer in Tarumoto's section as they did elsewhere on the railway. This is likely because the work went well, despite the difficulties. But Tarumoto's sense of duty and his sympathy for the prisoners were not equal. If he had not been able to finish the track on time, he would have given in to harsher treatment of the prisoners. He himself said, "The railway soldiers were happy, good-natured men *as long as the work went well*."[207] He wrote this in regard to the incident when the POW who broke a shovel was slapped, but it also describes many abusive relationship; as long as things go the way the oppressor likes, the oppressed will not be hurt. The oppressed live under constant threat.

[207] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 106. Emphasis added.

That Tarumoto would give in to more abusive treatment can be asserted confidently because he related his assignment in Matoma, Thailand, which commenced in mid-April 1943.[208] As before, he was concerned about completing the project, which included building seven bridges. This time, the institutional barrier between the POW camp and the railway men was lower, and the captives could be worked with virtually no regulation. Additionally, the deadline was sooner than would be feasible even in safe conditions, and the prisoners were sick and tired from their previous job. Tarumoto described his thoughts about the new task: "The work at Matoma was the most wretched of all the construction work…It was hard to make them bear the heavy burden of completing the work by the set date. But what could I or the railway unit do about it?"[209]

It was now monsoon season, and it rained constantly. Heavy rain forced everyone to scurry to shelter, but they still worked in light rain. "The PoWs…wore tattered shorts or just a loincloth…Nobody had…extensive baggage…as most of it had been given to the inhabitants there [at Chungkai] in exchange for food."[210] Even so, whenever possible, they bought food from local vendors to escape the steady flow of rice. The captured Allies had serious cases of diarrhea and often did not reach the toilets in time. The men had lost all semblances of spirit. "Meeting their fate with resignation, they moved obediently as the Japanese instructed…They all wore shoes with holes in the toes…And when they started to work their bodies were covered with

[208] Juji Tarumoto, "Matoma, the Hardest Time of All," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 137-147.
[209] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 138.
[210] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 140.

mud," Tarumoto related.[211] They no longer looked like the proud British soldiers he had supervised at Chungkai.

"I deserved to be called inhuman for employing such men. But how many men could I get if I allowed all these men to rest and picked out only the healthy men for the work?" Tarumoto asked.[212] To speed the work up, Tarumoto's unit was assigned more soldiers, more native laborers, and an elephant. The deadline for the section of the railway was moved up to August, which Tarumoto was not sure he could meet, "but I determined to do all I could…My platoon had to complete the given task at all costs. That was all I could do. But consequences were to be expected."[213]

The expected consequences were quite grave. The conditions of the POWs and the soldiers became very similar. The Japanese were collapsing from exhaustion and sickness. Nearly half of Tarumoto's platoon was bedridden. The POWs could not work more than three days in a row. One POW "seemed to be almost dead with sunken goggling eyes."[214] Tarumoto denied responsibility for the atrocious conditions, saying "Many soldiers had succumbed to illness one by one due to the hard work at Matoma; it was not because I had ordered them to work until they broke down. It was natural that the order to work until they dropped had stimulated their determination to do their duty of their own free will."[215] He was partly correct. The railway was built despite a grave lack of supplies and tools, and despite the danger in building through

[211] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 140.
[212] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 140.
[213] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 142.
[214] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone,"142.
[215] Tarumoto, "My Touchstone," 146.

that region. This was the due to the overly ambitious leadership's lack of planning, and Tarumoto had no control over his orders. However, he is incorrect that he did not work the soldiers until they were sick. While there was no prevention or treatment against sickness, the men were directly ordered to work when their strength returned, even if they were not completely recovered. Tarumoto was also sick, but continued working. This drove a cycle of sickness among both Japanese and prisoner, which occurred because the paramount goal was not the safety of the POWs or even the Japanese, but the construction of the railway.

"The Very Image of Hell"

Kamuro Takumi graduated from the Military Academy in late 1942, was assigned to the 9th Railway Regiment, and travelled to Thailand in May 1943.[216] He led a platoon at Tampi, along with 2000 native laborers, 1300 POWs, and some Japanese civilians who were trained in rock blasting. They had to blast the Konyu Cutting, also known as Hellfire Pass. Kamuro set his soldiers on twelve-hour shifts and the POWs on eight-hour shifts. Since work continued long into the night, lanterns and bamboo fires illuminated the site. At the worksite, the POW and native laborers outnumbered the Japanese soldiers nearly seventy to one.

Karumo continually worried that his unit was the slowest in the battalion and resolved to make his men work faster. He was hampered by the lack of manpower for administration. Eleven of his railway men oversaw sanitation, food supply, wage distribution, and other miscellaneous tasks. Karumo regretted that he could not use

[216] Takumi Karumo, "The Konyu Cutting," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 111-117.

them in the construction, where their expertise was desperately needed, but the supply system was inadequate and the battalion was stretched thin. When a commander who had been a civil engineer was dispatched to the unit to help, Karumo felt shame, thinking that he was delaying the battalion. "I made up my mind that I would make a desperate drive to complete the task," he related.[217]

At the end of May, their pneumatic drills arrived. Everyone was excited about the delivery, and according to Karumo, "Our soldiers often did not ask for a rest, even if they had a fever, and kept on working with flushed faces."[218] As the blasting work deadline neared, the officers came to urge a faster pace. Describing the pressure he felt, Karumo explained,

> The urgings of the company commander and the battalion commander became more intense day by day, and one evening the regimental commander went round the work site with a stick in his hand. Even though the commander repeatedly emphasized that the construction workers should be respected…the paramount order was to cut through the rocky mountain as soon as possible. So I was under great pressure. I stood on top of a rock day and night and shouted and threw small stones at those who seemed to be idle.[219]

Clearly the ambition of his superiors and their hypocritical disregard for the prisoners' wellbeing was passed on to Karumo. Therefore, it was permissible for him to throw stones at 'lazy' workers, since their welfare was not considered as important as the results of their work.

Not only did Karumo become more aggressive, according to his own recollections, he also became more reckless. He ordered his soldiers to light thirty

[217] Karumo, "The Konyu Cutting," 113.
[218] Karumo, "The Konyu Cutting," 113-116.
[219] Karumo, "The Konyu Cutting," 116.

fuses at the same time. By the time the last fuse was lit the first two charges would explode, causing danger for the man igniting the fuses. POWs were not allowed to do this hazardous duty, so it was the Japanese who were put in harm's way. Once the blasting was done for the Konyu Cutting, the railway men, the POWs and the native laborers celebrated with rice balls and tiny presents.

Like Tarumoto, Karumo claimed not to be particularly violent toward his charges. Karumo was obsessed with his work, constantly worrying that he would not make the outrageous deadline set by the leadership. The implication that he was underperforming, expressed by the assignment of a civil engineer to his unit, was abhorrent to Karumo. He seemed to be less concerned with the POWs' safety than Tarumoto, never mentioning feelings of pity for them. But just like Tarumoto, when he could not both complete the work and take care of the POWs or his own men, he was willing to risk any lives to finish the blasting on time, as seen with his order to light thirty fuses at once. He chose his duty over the safety of the men under his command. Of course, one must not forget the social pressure to fulfill his duties and the poor labor situation, which left his soldiers overstretched, responsible for overseeing a massive workforce.

He did not mention POWs being abused excessively, but it is certain that they were, especially given the regimental commander's concern with their site and his apparent habit of carrying a stick, which was likely used to strike those who were not working to his expectations. Karumo admitted that he pelted workers with rocks — presumably native, POW, or Japanese—if they appeared to be neglecting their labor.

The abuse, conditions, and danger of Hellfire Pass is not said directly but implied. Even what Karumo implied is not very significant. He claimed there was a sense of camaraderie when the work was finished. Australian POWs remember the situation in a harsher light. The Australian government's commemorative website describes the Konyu Cutting as follows: "This flickering light [of the bamboo fires], the noise from the drilling of the rock and the shuffling of hundreds of poorly fed prisoners seemed the very image of hell."[220] It would not be surprising if Karumo had not told the whole story. Indeed, the Konyu Cutting had a reputation as hell incarnate among the prisoners, and the Thailand-Burma Railway likewise had a reputation as a death trap.

"A Country of Gentlemen"

Corporal Ishii Yukichi was the chief of mess for his company in the 9th Railway Regiment at Tampi.[221] With five other men, he prepared the food for all the Japanese soldiers, which was difficult considering the lack of variety in the food supply, which made the canned food they possessed highly valuable. One day, a subordinate told Ishii that some tins were missing. "Hearing it, I thought instantly that Japanese soldiers had stolen the tin," Ishii said, and he set a watch to protect the food and catch the culprit. [222] They nearly caught the thief, but he escaped, leaving behind a bag with English letters on it.

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[220] Australian Government, Department of Veteran Affairs, "The Building of Hellfire Pass: Hellfire Pass," *hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au*, accessed November 12, 2015, http://hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au/building-hellfire-pass/hellfire-pass.php.
[221] Yukichi Ishii, "A Thief of Tins," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 151-153.
[222] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 152.

Ishii visited the POW camp to investigate. Due to tension between the Koreans and the Japanese, the Korean guard was skeptical, but allowed Ishii to pass. They found the bag's owner, who had malaria and was unable to steal anything. Ishii determined that the only way to find the perpetrator was to question the bag's owner.

> We gradually raised our voices, and many of his comrades gathered round us; the situation began to take on a serious aspect. I thought of making my exit at that point, but then a tall man…came forward and announced 'I took his bag to go and steal.' I felt relieved and took him to the camp commander, who…said to me, 'Deal with him as you think fit.'[223]

Ishii noted that they took the culprit to their tent, and he readily explained his crime: he stole the food to nourish sick prisoners. He said he would accept any punishment, but did not want the case to become official. "We were impressed by him, and thought that if we had been in his position we might not have confessed a crime which might be followed by punishment."[224]

Feeling they could not let him go unpunished, they decided with his consent that fifty strikes on his back would be appropriate. After the last strike, Ishii hurried to the man and held him, saying that the punishment was over. It seems he was fond of this prisoner, even then. The POW thanked him. "We had not expected this kind of answer. 'Don't you feel resentful, after being beaten so much?'"[225] The prisoner answered that he had committed a crime and should expect punishment. He was only grateful that it was not done publically. Ishii's punishment is understandable, if extreme. The prisoner had broken the rules, albeit like a modern-day Robin Hood. But,

[223] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 152.
[224] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 153.
[225] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 153.

Ishii's choice of punishment would be considered a war crime since it was against international law to hit captured soldiers.

Ishii did not rely on the captives to do his job, so he was not frustrated with them as Tarumoto and Karumo were. A POW stole precious food, so the mess men were somewhat irked. They heatedly questioned the sick prisoner, but Ishii reported relief when the real perpetrator confessed. Frustration is an understandable reaction and not one that would necessarily beget a beating. Ishii's attitude toward the British is not revealed, but he did not seem to have dehumanized them. The lack of hatred for the British may be due to Ishii's position as chief of mess, which did not require contact with them, particularly since the unit was stationed far from the front lines. It could also be attributed to the fact that the British were not discriminated against like the Chinese. The Japanese had disparaged the Chinese since before 1895, while anti-British propaganda surfaced only during the 1930s.[226] This leaves one motivation for Ishii's choice of punishment: it seemed appropriate.

While Ishii thought that resentment was the response to beatings, he chose it due to its universality in the Japanese Army. If a soldier misbehaved, he was struck. Ishii probably felt resentful toward the authority figures that disciplined him, but did not think of alternative punishments. He seemed to have no passionate emotions that

[226] Hanson W. Baldwin, "Japan and the Future," *The North American Review* vol. 237, no. 3 (March 1934): 203-214. Baldwin notes that Great Britain "has drawn somewhat apart" (p208) from Japan in recent months due to Japan's ambitions in China, Japan's growing military strength, and a conflict over markets in China and India. Baldwin also notes the existence of posters demanding the withdrawal of British power from Asia.

could have led him to punish the culprit. Ishii even seemed to respect the prisoner's willingness to take blame where it was due, so much so that they developed a rapport.

The captive's thankfulness moved the mess men so much that "we were all moved in our hearts, and…gave him a drink of the local gin…to console him."[227] They chatted with him about his family and his life in England. They sympathized with his desire to see his children, though his comment that the Allies would win the war annoyed them.

When they returned him to the camp, they gave him cigarettes, ten tins of bacon, and some Brussel sprouts, which were the only vegetables they had. The prisoner was so overjoyed that the next time Ishii was at the worksite, the POW ran up to shake his hand. This incident is thus a rather remarkable episode, and one that would likely never be repeated: an action that is classifiable as a war crime led to an unlikely friendship.

Despite the relative benignity of his reported experience, Ishii said, "Thinking of the state of things when we later became prisoners, we felt deeply that the British have the fine character of a country of gentlemen. I think we lost the war in terms of humanity."[228] Ishii did not explain whether this reminiscence was related to his actions or to Japanese actions generally.

Between Two Sides

[227] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 153.
[228] Ishii, "Thief of Tins," 153.

Like Kasayama, Lee Han Ne was a Korean POW guard.[229] Like Kasayama, he volunteered without overt coercion, assuming that he would be drafted anyway. The police who recruited him told him a guard's salary was good and he could avoid the front lines. But, "a failure to accept the recommendation of the powerful police could result in a decrease in the food allocation to my family, which would be critical," so he felt he had no choice.[230]

He was trained in Pusan as an infantryman, having neither instruction in international law nor in the customs and culture of possible prisoners. Lee was sure his training was inadequate for his job. He felt they were taught to normalize beatings:

> We were slapped on the cheek…very often for even a minor error…Sometimes everybody in the group was slapped for a mistake made by one person, or we had to stand in two lines facing each other and slap the comrade in front of us under strict supervision. These persistent practices implanted in us a feeling that the slapping was a common and acceptable form of penalty, and after being slapped the mistake would be forgiven.[231]

In February 1943, he was shipped to Hintok, Thailand to a camp with many Dutch, British, and Australian inmates. Once there, the Korean guards built shelters for themselves and the prisoners. The shelters were uncomfortable, with leaky palm-thatched roofs and bamboo frames. The food was equally poor: "Even if vegetables had been forwarded to us they would have all rotted on the way in the tropical heat.

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[229] Lee Han Ne, "Korean Guards," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 156-160.
[230] Lee, "Korean Guards," 156.
[231] Lee, "Korean Guards," 157.

We were told that meat and flour were not available in Thailand where the Japanese army procured its food."[232]

Because of poor housing and food, the captives became sick in droves. Lee remembered that the number of potential laborers for the railway dropped rapidly and the camp commandant ordered that as many workers as possible be sent. So they sent the strongest patients. Lee was in charge of deciding the terms on which prisoners were loaned to the 9th Railway Regiment. "If they needed 300 workers, and we had only 270 fit to work, what choice did we have? We had to send thirty men from the 'mildly ill' category off to the hard work. Whatever our feelings, they did not count," he explained.[233]

In June, the commandant ordered Lee to give the soldiers all the POWs the railway soldiers asked for, since the railway men had a strict schedule. Lee felt he had no choice but to obey, and he claimed it was difficult ordering such wretched men to do hard labor. They were so weak that they spent hours longer than a standard shift drilling into rock to meet the quota. This made them more exhausted and less likely to convalesce. Additionally, the coming of monsoon season impeded the delivery of food. Even rice became unavailable in sufficient quantity. The captives received pay, and "greedy" local merchants set up food stalls, but the prices were too "exorbitant" and the POWs' wages too "meagre" to buy enough food.[234] Lee felt he could do little to help the sickly men, though he claimed he occasionally bought eggs for them.

[232] Lee, "Korean Guards," 157.
[233] Lee, "Korean Guards," 158.
[234] Lee, "Korean Guards," 158-159.

Technically, the prisoners were not allowed to deal with the merchants, but the guards allowed it and even helped the prisoners negotiate at times.

With many dying from such conditions, some prisoners evidently became unruly. They stole supplies, avoided work, and fought each other. For the 500 Allied POWs there were only about seven guards. "The PoWs were taller than us and were better built, so we looked upon them with a kind of awe…we were always afraid that we might lose control of these sturdy and numerous PoWs and that we might be overwhelmed by them," Lee reported.[235] Lee and the others resorted to the method they had been taught: they slapped and beat the misbehaving prisoners.

On one occasion, Lee ordered a POW who was misbehaving at morning roll call to behave. When the prisoner ignored this order, Lee struck him, but the prisoner was not subdued. Lee regretted hitting the POW, and did not strike him again, but his fellow guards quickly beat the captive for his misbehavior. Once the man was subdued, the other guards rebuked Lee for being soft, saying that guards had to make the POWs obey the camp's rules. The other guards had the same rank as Lee, so Lee did not feel he could contradict them.

Lee painted a picture of helplessness regarding his own actions. He never believed he could change the prisoners' circumstances, and perhaps he was right. The problems of food supply and shelter were institutional and beyond his control. The supply chain all along the railway was insufficient, leaving units short of vital supplies. Here Lee seemed to have had compassion for the POWs. If his account is to be believed, he

[235] Lee, "Korean Guards," 159.

allowed them to obtain food from merchants outside the camp, and he tried to feed them better, though his efforts were by their nature small-scale. He implied that he felt pity for the sick and dying when he stated "Their [the sick POWs] situation was miserable, and many met with a tragic death."[236] For shelter, the prisoners and the guards had similar housing, as both groups lived in shacks. It is likely that the camp personnel were fed better than the prisoners or not worked as hard, given their apparent healthiness in being able to push the larger prisoners around.

Lee blamed his "bad habit" of slapping on the military's institutional violence.[237] Abusive behavior was normalized in his training, but he could have changed. His reluctance to modify his behavior may have stemmed from the social pressure his comrades exerted and the fear of a prisoner revolt. Ingrained abuse, fear, and pressure to conform limited his willingness to change.

Social pressure was also a defining factor in Lee's decisions about sending prisoners to work. He pitied the captives he sent out, but claimed his hands were tied because his commandant ordered that the railway men receive all the help they requested. The railway's construction evidently weighed as heavily on the commandant's mind as it did on Karumo and Tarumoto. But not everyone was equally concerned: Tarumoto mentioned that a commandant forbade one unit from using prisoners after one was abused. He also said that at Matoma, the POWs were at the railway men's disposal regardless of their treatment.[238] Therefore, the situation could

[236] Lee, "Korean Guards," 159.
[237] Lee, "Korean Guards," 159.
[238] Lee, "Korean Guards," 93, 138.

vary widely along the railway, and Lee's commandant had a hand in the forced labor of sick captives. Still, this pushed Lee to send the soldiers out to hard labor, evidently without protest.

Lee was a victim/victimizer like Kasayama. He volunteered to join the Imperial Army as a civilian contractor because he knew he would eventually be coerced, and he endured abusive training, not to mention the general discrimination he faced as a Korean. When his contract expired in January 1944, he was not discharged. He heard rumors of a man who was beaten for asking for his discharge papers. He thought that the civilians in the army were "less highly regarded than carrier-pigeons."[239] It is clear that Lee does not consider himself a war criminal.

Conclusion

In the sources this study utilized, *Japan at War* and *Railwaymen in the War*, the Cooks and Tamayama provide a unique resource to researchers that has not been thoroughly utilized. Despite the difficulties associated with oral history, especially when decades separate the subject from the period recounted, oral histories could be used to further develop the perspective of the perpetrators themselves, thus providing a richer understanding of Japanese war crimes in World War II.

None of the men whose testimonies are recounted set out to murder, steal, or abuse. The common threads in their thinking include many variables. However, through a complex set of factors, many of them now bear the label of "war criminal." Even perpetrators who were never convicted are guilty of similar crimes to those who

[239] Lee, "Korean Guards," 160.

were. Social pressure was a major theme, which peers and superiors exerted through expectations of stoic murder or unbridled ambition. Examples include Tominaga's and Uno's experiences with executions, as well as Tarumoto's work on the Thailand-Burma Railway, and Yuasa's time in the operating room. In all these situations, these men were expected to perform their 'duty' regardless of the effect it had on others. Racism pervaded many of the soldiers' worldviews, dehumanizing their victims and making it easier to mistreat them. All the soldiers were desensitized to violence, having committed violence and seen it committed, subsequently making it easier to contemplate and carry out violent acts.

Fear and frustration also contributed to the episodes described, like in Nogi's case, when the Americans constantly raided Ambon, and Nogi felt he must take action. He thus beheaded captured American pilots. Finally, material deprivation sometimes caused abuse as well, as with Tarumoto, Kamuro, and Lee, who worked on the railway in Thailand. They suffered without food and supplies, allowing the prisoners' conditions to deteriorate because they allegedly had nothing to give them.

Oral histories present issues when a researcher attempts to use them. The written history has often been translated and edited. In the case of these compilations, the reasons for choosing one account over other possible accounts to include in the collection are not given. The researcher cannot ask questions or request clarification on any vague points. Even so, these oral histories provide an invaluable window into the minds of some perpetrators that has rarely been touched upon by previous academic investigations. These accounts suggest that these men, while committing

monstrous acts from our perspective today, were not themselves monsters, but rather, were ordinary men who committed serious crimes. They had families, hopes, and dreams they left behind when they went to war. When they returned from the battlefield or from prison, they returned to the same pedestrian lives they had lived before the war, despite the dramatic, life-altering events they experienced.

This dimension of humanity—common people adjacent to their misdeeds—gives an opportunity for greater understanding of the Japanese's and others' war crimes by seeing them through the perpetrators' eyes. The Cooks' and Tamayama's works provide compelling answers to the question of why ordinary men sometimes do terrible things.

Hopefully, this study has demonstrated these men's humanity, as well as their susceptibility to the pressures placed upon them during their service in the Imperial Japanese military. However, the juxtaposition of the ordinariness of the soldiers' previous lives and the extraordinary situations they experienced leads to the question, "Why did some soldiers *not* commit crimes?" Certainly, *Japan at War* and *Railwaymen in the War* provide examples of Japanese soldiers being humane. One is that of Sato Tokuzo who worked in a supply depot on the Thailand-Burma Railway.[240] He allowed the prisoners who worked under him to bath in the river, even giving them soap. He gave extra rations to some POWs who worked for him at another posting. Another example is that of intelligence officer Fujiwara Iwaichi, who spent the

[240] Tokuzo Sato, "A Private and Prisoners," *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand, 1941-47* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 153-156. Sato's name is also give as Saito on page 155.

Malayan campaign recruiting Indian soldiers from the British Army.[241] Fujiwara trusted the Indians, and once, while riding alone in a convoy with newly surrendered soldiers, he fell asleep on the shoulder of an Indian officer. The Indians were quite impressed, but Fujiwara reported that he saw them as his comrades, not enemies.

Though the question of why some reacted humanely while others acted harshly is not within the scope of this study, the story of a man named Mizuguchi hinted at an answer: he was raised in the Philippines, and had friends, family, and experience with the culture there. It was his home as much as Japan was, and he treated it as such for the most part. He stole out of desperation during the American invasion of the Philippines, but he tried to avoid it, and he avoided executions.[242] Fujiwara's and Shinozaki Mamoru's experiences also suggest that a connection to the local people can mitigate wartime atrocities. Fujiwara reportedly desired to liberate Asia, and saw cooperating with the local people as the best way to accomplish this goal. Shinozaki lived in Singapore, worked in the embassy, and had local friends.[243] When the Sook Ching began, he saved people he believed were innocent. Still, the concept does not apply to all the subjects, given Uno's example. He was raised in Tianjin by a Chinese nurse, but still committed murders during the war in China. As previously discussed, it is possible that Uno was still surrounded by too much anti-Chinese propaganda to develop a connection with the local people in the way that other Japanese sometimes connected on a human level with local people in the Philippines or Malaya.

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[241] Fujiwara, *F Kikan*, 124-125.
[242] Hiroyuki Mizuguchi, *Jungle of No Mercy: Memoir of a Japanese Soldier* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2010).
[243] Fujiwara, *F Kikan*; Shinozaki, *Wartime Experiences*, 2.

Memoirs and oral histories of the Japanese experience during World War II might suggest answers to the question of how to mitigate violence, and as difficult as it would undoubtedly be, it is an excellent topic for future study. These sources also speak to questions of collaboration and the victim/victimizer complex. The victim/victimizer complex in particular is of interest regarding Japanese and Korean war memories. Memoirs may additionally suggest how the international community should heal the wounds of massacres. Certainly, untapped memoirs, accounts, and oral histories exist. Additionally, some Japanese from the war era are still living, though the time to record their memories is short.

A significant number of the men discussed in this study appear to have come to terms with their wartime records. This was the case especially with Tominaga, Uno, and Yuasa, who all seemed to take responsibility for their actions. Others, such as Nogi and Ogawa also did, but the former three are particularly interesting because they all experienced communist China's justice. This suggests that Mao's government had effective rehabilitation, while the Allied trials were divisive. A comparative study of the trials and prison conditions may yield answers regarding reconciliation and perpetrators' acceptance of their guilt. Some accounts hinted that the treatment of native peoples at the hands of the Japanese was worse than that of Europeans, which would be a subject worthy of investigation as well. These are topics that could provide dividends to the international community in investigations of modern-day genocides and war crimes, such as the genocides in Darfur and Rwanda and the war crimes and genocide in Serbia in the 1990s.

Historians often present their subject in a dry manner, displaying little of the emotion that marks the human experience. While their job is to discern meaning from the past, the experiences and emotion revealed in oral histories provides a human perspective that cannot be ignored. Despite the sometimes self-serving nature of memoirs and oral history, these two sources could potentially bring fresh perspective to many subjects, as enumerated above, and as demonstrated in the body of this paper.

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