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**Constructing the Burma-Thailand
Railway:
The War Crimes Trials and the
Shaping of an Episode of WWII**

Kazunori Hashimoto

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Department of History
SOAS, University of London

Constructing the Burma-Thailand Railway:

The War Crimes Trials and the Shaping of an Episode of WWII

Kazunori Hashimoto

Abstract

The history of the Burma-Thailand Railway has been constructed on the basis of ex-POWs' perceptions. Numerous memoirs and literature have been published by ex-POWs and shaped popular history. Nevertheless, officer POWs' account has been most influential owing to their duty to produce official reports for the army authorities and evidence for the war crimes trials. The findings of the trials, reported sensationally by the press, influenced the public image of the railway and the POWs' plight. Accordingly, the experience of the most tragic POWs, F Force, has become the standard in describing various POWs' experiences on the railway. Notably, Colonel Cyril Wild, a former F Force officer and a war crimes investigator, played a crucial role to consolidate this 'atrocities' effect. Besides, the POWs' version of events did not reflect the perspectives of the IJA's railway engineers and camp personnel. As the POWs had different viewpoints according to the rank and the unit, so did the Japanese. Inside the IJA, there were frictions between the Imperial Headquarters and the Railway Corps; also, the railway engineers and POW camp staff. Thus, this thesis focuses on differences not only between the enemies but also among the friends on the same side. Particularly, on the POWs' side, gaps were conspicuous between officers and other ranks. Furthermore, among the officers, medical officers had different views from combatant officers, and those with civilian experience were more flexible than career officers. Besides, the British and the Australians behaved quite differently from each other. This thesis explores how the railway's history was formed among the various groups and how other perspectives' inclusion changes this history.

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Abbreviation

AIF Australian Imperial Force

Anzac Australian & New Zealand Army Corps

CGS Chief of the General Staff

DJAG Department of the Judge Advocate General

FEPOW Far East Prisoners of War

FMSVF Federated Malay States Volunteer Force

GARD Generic and Rare Diseases Information Center

GSO General Staff Office

IHQ Imperial Headquarters

IJA Imperial Japanese Army

IJN Imperial Japanese Navy

IWM Imperial War Museum

JACAR Japan Center for Asian Historical Records

LSTM Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

MML Manual Military Law

MOFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MOW Ministry of War

NIDS National Institute for Defense Studies

NIH National Institute of Health

OWP Officer Working Party

PRO Public Record Office

PTSD Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RA Royal Army

RAMC Royal Army Medical Corps

SAC Southern Army Command

SEATIC South East Asia Translation and Interpretation Centre

TNA The National Archives

Introduction

Popular history and its problem

Public interest in the Burma-Thailand Railway, which is often called the 'Death Railway', began with a popular film. Although Pierre Boulle's novel *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai* (1952) was published five years earlier, the impact of the David Lean-directed film, '*The Bridge on the River Kwai*' (1957), produced by Anglo-American film-makers, was so massive that a substantial number of diaries and memoirs by ex-POWs, documentary films, and even a sequel to the movie followed. However, when the film was made, Lieutenant General Percival, in a letter, expressed concern that a wrong image of the British POWs cooperating with the enemy could be created in public by the film.¹ Survivors from the railway agreed and what followed was a torrent of memoirs from the ex-POWs' side.

Unlike the ex-POWs' memoirs, a small number of academic works have been written on the subject. Regarding the paucity, Paul H. Kratoska comments that "Despite popular interest in the railway over the years, it has attracted little academic attention."² Also, Jane Sibylla Flower points out that "there are a number of biographies of leading figures of the railway, and a few interpretive works; the whole subject, apart from the medical aspect, has received very little scholarly attention."³ Accordingly, very few academic explanations and analyses have been given regarding what happened on the railway. Thus, one of the primary objectives of this research is to reconstruct the railway project's existing account

¹ The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), WO32/16027. Lt. General Percival's letter in 'Film "The Bridge on the River Kwai" Correspondence Concerning Film Script'.

² Paul H. Kratoska, 'General Introduction', in P.H. Kratoska(ed.) *The Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1946: Documents and Selected Writings* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).Vol.1. p.6.

³ Jane Sibylla Flower, 'Captors and Captives on the Burma-Thailand Railway', in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich(eds.) *Prisoners-Of-War and Their Captors in World War II* (Oxford; Washington D.C.: Berg, 1996), p.233.

into an academically enhanced one by examining and analysing the narratives told by the POWs and the Japanese servicemen and how the episodes were shaped.

The popular history

Firstly, the influence of popular history based on ex-POWs' memoirs needs to be carefully examined. Colonel Philip Toosey was a key figure in the railway's popular history as he had been the commander of the bridge camp at Tamarkan and thus became the model of 'Colonel Nicolson' in the film. Notably, after the film's release, Toosey decided to publish his experience as the commander of the real River Kwai camp in order to correct the incorrect image of the POWs disseminated by the film. In Toosey's biography *The Man behind the Bridge : Colonel Toosey and the River Kwai*, P. N. Davies explains that:

As Toosey was both the president of the Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOW) Federation and had also been the senior British officer at the bridge camp (the part played so convincingly by Alec Guinness), pressure developed for him to attempt to correct the misleading image that had, quite innocently, been presented.⁴

At first, Toosey refused to publish his memoirs, which he had already written, but finally agreed to the publication in the form of a biography prepared by a professional author. Then, P. N. Davies, a historian specialising in maritime economic history at the University of Liverpool, was asked by Toosey to rewrite his autobiography to his biography.⁵ Davies later committed himself to publish the English version of a Japanese railway engineer's memoirs, *Across the Three Pagodas Pass : The Story of the Thai-Burma Railway*.⁶ Yoshihiko Futamatsu, the author of the memoirs, and Davies became friends through their research on the

⁴ P.N. Davies, *The Man Behind the Bridge : Colonel Toosey and the River Kwai* (London; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone, 1991), p.xi.

⁵ Ibid., pp.xi-xiii.

⁶ Yoshihiko Futamatsu, *Across the Three Pagodas Pass : The Story of the Thai-Burma Railway* (Folkstone, Kent: Renaissance Books, 2013).

railway. Without the film, these books would not have been published. Thus, although the film is fictional for entertainment, its influence cannot be ignored in the real world.

In 1969, John Coast, a former POW subaltern, who had published his memoirs *Railroad of Death* in 1946, anchored a BBC documentary entitled *Return to the River Kwai*.⁷ According to Karl Hack, the documentary was inspired by Boulle's novel and its cinematisation, which had muddled fact and fiction about the railway.⁸ The latest edition of Coast's book *Railroad of Death: The Original, Classic Account of the 'River Kwai' Railway* contains the appendix 'BBC Script from the 1969 Documentary'. In the documentary, Coast met with Takashi Nagase, a former Japanese serviceman, interviewing him to discuss the reality of the railway. Nagase had already published his memoirs and engaged in reconciliation activities with ex-POWs after the war. It should be noted that Nagase was an interpreter of the *Kempeitai*, the IJA's military police, neither an engineer nor a member of the railway camp staff. After Japan's surrender, Nagase, by chance, became an interpreter for an Allied investigation team searching for POWs' graves along the railway and got involved in the activities concerning the railway and the POWs. In 1988, Nagase published his memoirs of the searching trip for the POW graves along the river.⁹ Nagase's involvement with the ex-POWs led to another post-war episode.

In 2013, the film *The Railway Man* was released, which was the cinematising of the book with the same title written by Eric Lomax, an ex-POW.¹⁰ In 1993, forty-three years after the war, Lomax successfully confronted and forgave Nagase, who had actually interrogated him for spying and concealing the railway map. The *Kempeitai* was notorious for its harsh treatment to suspects, who were often

⁷ Imperial War Museum (IWM) has the film with catalogue number MGH300.

⁸ John Coast, *Railroad of Death: The Original, Classic Account of the 'River Kwai' Railway*, ed. By Justin Nash, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Myrmidon Books, 2014). p.xi.

⁹ Takashi Nagase (ed), *Kuwai Gawa Horyo Bochi Sosaku Ko (The Searching Trip for POW Graves along the River Kwai)*, (Tokyo: Shakai Shiso Sha, 1988).

¹⁰ Eric Lomax, *The Railway Man: A POW's Searing Account of War, Brutality and Forgiveness*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

tortured. While their reconciliation was a dramatic episode, it is still an additional element to the railway's history since the *Kempeitai*'s maltreatment was a different matter. Moreover, Flower points out that "Lomax entrusted the telling of his story to another hand, but the text has little value from a historical point of view."¹¹

Flower also points to deficiencies of other ex-POWs' memoirs: Ernest Gordon's *Miracle of the River Kwai* (1963)¹²; and Leo Rawlings and Bill Duncan's *And the Dawn Came Up Like A Thunder* (1972)¹³. As Flower puts it, when former officer POWs read *Miracle of the River Kwai*, "One dismissed it as 'full of misinterpretations and inaccuracies' and the second commented that 'so much is embroidered and exaggerated'."¹⁴ According to Flower, the book's publisher explained that it had been ghost-written and altered by several editors in the U.S.¹⁵ Moreover, Flower revealed that Leo Rawlings and Bill Duncan's *And the Dawn Came Up Like A Thunder*, which Lord Mountbatten gave a foreword, contained imaginary experiences on the railway since Duncan had never been a POW in the Far East.¹⁶ When this book was published in Japan in 1984, translated into Japanese by Nagase, Duncan's name was excluded.¹⁷

Geoffrey Adams was another POW author who visited Japan and had talks with former IJA engineers. In 1973, Adams published his memoirs entitled *No Time for Geishas*.¹⁸ His episode was unique because he had been appointed by the Japanese as a cattle driver and could see the situation on the railway from a different angle. In 1981, Adams and his fellow ex-POW M. Janis met with Futamatsu and Renichi Sugano, a former company commandant, the 9th Railway Corps, in front of the locomotive C5631 in the Yasukuni Shrine. The locomotive

¹¹ Flower, 'Captors and Captives on the Burma-Thailand Railway', p.228.

¹² Ernest Gordon, *Miracle on the River Kwai* (London: Collins, 1963).

¹³ Leo Rawlings, *And the Dawn Came up like Thunder* (Harpenden: Chapman Publications, 1972).

¹⁴ Flower, p.228.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Leo Rawlings, *Kuwai Gawa Horyo Shuyojō (River Kwai POW Camp)*, trans. by Takashi Nagase (Tokyo: Shakai Shiso Sha, 1984).

¹⁸ Geoffrey Pharaoh Adams, *No Time for Geishas* (London: Corgi, 1974).

had actually been used on the railway and brought back to Japan and placed in the Shrine in 1979. Sugano propelled the project, whereas Nagase strongly opposed it. In the talk with former engineers, Adams stated what he thought about Nagase. While recognising Nagase as a pacifist, Adams had an unfavourable opinion that Nagase's position was too much on POWs' side and too political with too much publicity in the media. Adams acrimoniously argued that before criticising the Railway Corps, it would be fair for Nagase to criticise the *Kempeitai* and explain what he had done and thought of it since the *Kempeitai*'s crime was equal to or even worse than that of the Railway Corps.¹⁹ Besides, at the meeting, both the ex-POWs and the former engineers agreed that the wrong image made by the famous film should be corrected for both sides.²⁰

Thus, the film gave impetus to the publication of the ex-POWs' memoirs and led to some communications between the ex-POWs and former IJA servicemen. Nevertheless, such memoirs could contain inaccuracies or bias without thorough examinations and analyses, while the memoirs offer views from different angles.

Japanese Literature

The film also stimulated interest in Japan, and many memoirs were published regarding the railway construction. Above all, Toshio Hiroike's book²¹ is essential for researchers because Hiroike, the Railway Corps' Chief of Staff, the Southern Army, was the railway's original planner. Japanese scholars seem to underestimate his memoirs probably because of his military career. Nevertheless, his position as the Railway Corps' chief of staff gave him privileged access to various sources even after the war. Moreover, the literature written by the person in the responsible position provides essential clues regarding why the Japanese adopted an approach that seemed irrational to the Westerners.

¹⁹ Kazuya Tsukamoto, 'Moto Eigun POW Mr G.P. Adams Oyobi Mr M. Janis Rainichi (British Ex-POWs Mr G.P. Adamas and Mr M. Janis' Visit to Japan)', 1981, Kaiko Bunko Library, The Yasukuni Shrine., pp.2-3.

²⁰ Ibid., p.3.

²¹ Toshio Hiroike, *Tai-Men Tetsudo: Senjo Ni Nokoru Hashi (The Thai-Burma Railway: The Bridge Remaining on the River Kwai)*, (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1971).

Interestingly, Hiroike never planned to employ the POWs as the workforce on the railway. As an engineer, he was sceptical of the outcome of employing the POWs. Thus, when receiving the order from the Imperial Headquarters (IHQ) that the POWs be employed for the construction, he was astonished and felt that the Railway Corps was now stuck with 'onerous labourers', the POWs.²² This was the real feeling of the Railway Corps at that time. Thus, the decision-making process regarding the POWs' employment in the railway construction should be researched as a vital part of the railway project's history. In chapter 1, the decision-making process inside the IJA will be delineated.

Juji Tarumoto's book²³ is also an indispensable source for researchers. Tarumoto was a notorious war criminal whom the POWs regarded as one of the most vicious Japanese on the railway. Thus, Tarumoto was sentenced to life imprisonment after the war. In 1995, fifty years after the war, an ex-POW visited Japan and confronted Tarumoto, demanding his apology. The scene was covered by the British media. Nevertheless, Tarumoto's memoirs suggest different aspects of what the POWs believed to be accurate. The perception gap between the Japanese and the POWs will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Another essential book is Major General Eiguma Ishida's memoirs.²⁴ Ishida was the Railway Corps Commander since mid-August 1943, two months before the completion of the railway. For his responsible position, he was sentenced to ten years imprisonment after the war. Interestingly, his memoirs indicate that there was friction even within the Railway Corps.

In the same trial with Ishida, co-accused Colonel Shigeo Nakamura, the former Commander of the Thai POW Camp Administration, was sentenced to death. He kept his diary until his execution, which was secretly handed over to his family by a Japanese monk. It was edited and published by his son Tatsuo Nakamura in 2008.

²² Hiroike, p.116.

²³ Juji Tarumoto, *Aru Sempan no Shuki (The Memoirs of a War Criminal)*, (Tokyo: Gendaishiryo Shuppan, 1999).

²⁴ Eiguma Ishida, *Ishida Eiguma Ikoshu: Taimen Ttsudō Kensetsu Dai Sandai Shireikan (The Memoirs of Eiguma Ishida, the Third Commander of the Burma-Thailand Railway Construction)*, (Kagoshima : Ishida Eiichi, 1999).

The diary reveals that the court's president promised Nakamura to write a letter for mitigation to the confirming officer. The letter is now preserved in the British National Archives as a document of the trial proceedings. Ishida and Nakamura's trial will be dealt with in chapters 3 and 4 as an essential source to analyse the episodes of the railway.

Notably, this trial, the most significant case concerning the railway, was severely criticised for the unfair sentence conferred to a co-accused, Lt. Colonel Yanagita, by an anonymous ex-POW in a letter to *The Times*. The British military authorities, the Department of the Judge Advocate General (DJAG), which had convened the war crimes trials, immediately responded to the letter and sent a letter to London, defending their position.²⁵ In 2014, Laura Noszlopy introduced the new edition of Coast's book and revealed that the letter's anonymous author was Coast. The criticism and the response indicate that a difference in perception existed between senior officers and subalterns, which will be dealt with in Chapter 2.

These differences over the trials suggest that there is room for scholars to conduct analyses of not only the courts' evidence and findings but also what was written in diaries, memoirs and letters of ex-POWs and former Japanese servicemen. Only a few scholarly works have dealt with their episodes and narratives in detail despite an abundance of publications stimulated by the film. Both Japanese and English sources are indispensable simply because the IJA servicemen and the POWs had different perspectives: the captors were the railway's planner and constructor, and the captives were forced to work on the railway. Thus, one of the main objectives of this research is to bridge the perception gaps between the POWs and the Japanese over what happened by looking at their cultural and institutional differences.

In the foreword to the English version of Futamatsu's memoirs, Davies states as follows:

[Ewart Escritt's] translation of this memoir into English now makes it

²⁵ TNA PRO WO311/541, 'War crimes in Far East: miscellaneous correspondence', DJAG's response to the criticism.

available to a wider range of readers around the world who would otherwise have had little opportunity of evaluating the non-Western viewpoint for, as noted earlier, there are few comparable works in English to which interested parties could refer. Thus, for the first time, posterity has been given the opportunity of reaching a balanced judgement on a highly controversial subject.²⁶

The publication of the English version of the Japanese engineer's memoirs is significant, contributing to academic research on the railway. Nevertheless, the book is still a small part of the vast array of sources. In order to broaden the bridge over the difference in perception between the former enemies, this thesis will explore the causes of such difference. On the railway, the facts such as the POWs' plight and the Japanese brutality were multifaceted and lying in their cultural, institutional gaps, which made it harder to comprehend the whole picture. Presumably, either side expected that the enemy should think and behave in the same manner. Thus, understanding both sides' national characters and military cultures is a key to the comprehensive account. Otherwise, only a superficial explanation or a biased stereotype would be drawn. In the prevailing account, it is long believed that the POWs' hardships were given intentionally by the Japanese who harboured indifference or malice towards them. However, Sarah Kovner suggests that it was not the IJA's deliberate aim to give hardships to POWs in their hand, stating that:

One of the most important lessons was how war crimes could result not from deliberate high-level decision making but from poor training, a lack of planning, and a callous disregard for anything but military priorities.²⁷

²⁶ Davies, p.xxii.

²⁷ Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020). p.215.

This view does not acquit the Japanese of responsibility for the POWs' plight as war crimes courts tried 'negative responsibility' of the Japanese, who had failed to prevent the war crimes.

Here, a multifaceted perspective should exist in the multi-national and multi-cultural events on the railway. Thus, it is worthwhile to evaluate diaries, memoirs and reports from every different group. In this respect, Aaron William Moore's suggestion is insightful.

When a soldier believed his diary to be a true reflection of his experience, how he narrated his own story inevitably affected his ideas about himself and the world around him – even if those ideas were inaccurate or came from public sources such as film reels or war fiction.²⁸

Bushido and brutality stereotype

It is widely accepted that the POWs were forced to work for the railway construction in harsh conditions even when they became very sick, and many died from the inhumane conditions, indifference, neglect, torture, and lack of medical care. In this respect, Clifford Kinvig argues that what characterised the attitude of the Japanese was 'sheer neglect and passive cruelty'²⁹. Furthermore, Philip Towle points out that the Japanese deliberately humiliated POWs in front of Asian people to show them the end of European superiority but that it was Asian labourers who were treated much worse than the POWs.³⁰ Regarding the reason for such treatment, Western scholars often argue that the Japanese believed that they belonged to the superior race, the *Yamato*, descendants of gods, and that they were to subjugate Asians and Westerners. However, as will be explained in Chapter 1, it was not racism but sectionalism that was a dominant factor in the

²⁸ Aaron William Moore, *Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p.17.

²⁹ Clifford Kinvig, 'Allied POWs and the Burma-Thailand Railway', in Philip Towle et al. (eds.), *Japanese Prisoners of War*. (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2000), p.56.

³⁰ Towle, "Introduction" in Towle et al. (eds.) op. cit., p.xv.

IJA's decision-making process.

Besides racism, Western scholars often regard Bushido, the code of Samurai warriors, as a significant factor for the IJA's brutal treatment towards POWs and civilian internees during WWII. Their logic is that, based on samurai warriors' notion that surrender was shameful, the IJA authorities prohibited soldiers from surrendering, forfeiting all the rights from those who surrendered. In short, Bushido was thought to have justified the harsh treatment of POWs.³¹ For instance, Lord Russell of Liverpool (Edward Frederick Langley Russell), in his book *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes*, argued that:

The uncivilised ill-treatment of prisoners of war by the Japanese was the natural outcome of the code of Bushido, which was inculcated into the Japanese soldier as part of his basic training.³²

Russell, a lawyer and a historian, who served the British Army of the Rhine as Deputy Judge Advocate General and became one of the legal advisors for war crimes trials after WWII, stated in the preface that:

[The book was] compiled from evidence given and documents produced at various war crimes trials and from affidavits and statements made by eyewitnesses of such crimes to war crime investigation commissions set up after the war by the Allies to bring the criminals to justice.³³

In short, Russell's view reflected the POWs' general understanding of the Japanese. Not an expert on the Japanese military or cultural history, Russell could not notice

³¹ See Robert S. La Forte and Ronald E. Marcello (eds.) *Building the Death Railway: The Ordeal of American POWs in Burma, 1942-1945*. (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1993)., p.xviii.

³² Edward Frederick Langley Russell of Liverpool, *The Knights of Bushido: A Short History of Japanese War Crimes* (London: Cassell, 1958), p.55.

³³ Ibid., p.vii.

the weakness of his argument. If Bushido had caused the brutality, Japanese soldiers would have always been brutal to enemies in other battles and wars, and similar war crimes would have been found in the IJA's history.

Regarding the link between the IJA and Bushido, G. C. Hurst comments that:

Bushido in many Western minds, as represented, for example, in Baron Russell's *The Knights of Bushido*, is intimately linked to the rise of Japanese imperialism, *kamikaze* attacks, suicide charges, and prisoner-of-war atrocities. That this is a historical perversion – that even if there was a modern bushido that functioned as a normative ethical code for Japanese troops, it might in fact be a modern creation, with no real link to any Japanese traditional set of ethics, real or imagined – is seldom considered.³⁴

Indeed, Bushido was an early modern creation when samurai warriors had not fought a war for generations. The concept of Bushido was reasserted in *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1899) by Inazo Nitobe, a Christian thinker, in English. C. Holmes and A. H. Ion explain the publication of the influential book as part of the process of reasserting Japanese values with a view that "after making crucial concessions in terms of the adoption of Western political forms or winning important concessions from the Western powers, there was often a re-assertion of the validity of traditional values."³⁵ Thus, the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education followed the promulgation of the 1889 Meiji Constitution in order to reassert traditional values based on Confucianism and emphasise the importance of loyalty to the Emperor. In short, Bushido, although it was a modern version, was used to promote nationalism and pride among Japanese people facing Western Powers.

³⁴ G. Cameron Hurst, 'Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The Bushidō Ideal', *Philosophy East and West*, 40.4 (1990), 511–27., p.511.

³⁵ Colin Holmes and A. H. Ion, 'Bushidō and the Samurai: Images in British Public Opinion, 1894-1914', *Modern Asian Studies*, 14.2 (1980), 309–29., p.311.

Notably, not only the Japanese but also Westerners attributed Japan's success as an emerging power to its unique traditional code – Bushido. As Holmes and Ion point out, many Westerners, especially the British, tried to understand Japan and her successful transformation through Bushido and learn the virtue from it, the debate of which continued until the Great War.³⁶ As the virtue of the Japanese was attributed to Bushido by Westerners, so the vice could be. How the modern version of Bushido was adopted in the IJA will be discussed in Chapter 1.

Philip Towle suggests a different view on the IJA's brutality. Taking the 'ferocious guerrilla warfare' in China into account, Towle dismisses the widespread argument that the Japanese inhumane treatment towards POWs was caused by the supposed traditional Japanese value of despising those who surrendered and regarding their lives forfeited.³⁷ In fact, Japan maintained a good reputation for its humane treatment of POWs until WWI. The flaw of the widespread assumption about Japanese brutality is presumably due to the scarcity of scholarly works on the subject.

The paucity of academic works

Regarding the reason for the paucity, Flower points to the British Government's decision to close the principal reports on the POWs until the 1990s.³⁸ In fact, however, the documents of war crimes trials that the British military authorities had held were already made public between 1977 and 1981. Accordingly, many reports on the railway construction and the suffering of the POWs became available concurrently. Thus, Flower's argument is not tenable here. Scholars could have referred to the reports made by officer POWs, although such reports were necessarily based on the officers' perspectives.

The linguistic barrier might have been a significant obstacle to Western scholars since the Japanese carried out the railway project and kept their documents and records in their language. So far, comparisons between the Allied

³⁶ Holmes and Ion, p.329.

³⁷ Philip Towle, *From Ally to Enemy: Anglo-Japanese Military Relations, 1900-45* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2006), pp.118-9.

³⁸ Flower, p.233.

documents and the Japanese documents have not thoroughly been conducted by Western scholars, who refer to little Japanese literature in their works.

Furthermore, research on the railway requires extensive knowledge of not only military history but also the national cultures and histories of the British and the Japanese, as well as the geography and the climate of the region. The topic may become too broad to comprehend.

Nevertheless, there have been some useful academic works on the subject. Flower's essay 'Captors and Captives on the Burma-Thailand Railway' is among the few scholarly works on the railway and a good and compact introduction to the topic. Notably, it has given a hint to this thesis about the officer-men division among the POWs, which will be a focal point of argument. While there existed such a division and thus different perspectives between the officers and other ranks, the Allied authorities' official account has overlooked the difference.

Kratoska has edited *The Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1946: Documents and Selected Writings* (Vol.1-6), which contains various primary sources related to the railway and the POWs, including some Japanese documents. The richness and breadth of the sources are a helpful guide for researchers in the field. In Volume 1, Kratoska provided an essay entitled 'General Introduction', a compact overview of the railway project and the POWs' plight.

Kinvig's book *River Kawai Railway: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railway*³⁹ is also valuable work. Flower regards it as "The best general survey of the railway's construction, and an evaluation of the project in terms of strategy, logistics and manpower."⁴⁰ Also, Kratoska comments that "Rather than adding fresh information, Kinvig's main purpose appears to have been to produce a reliable and readable summary, and in it, he was successful."⁴¹ Notably, Kinvig's research was supported by his deep insight into the character of the IJA. As a retired Major-General of the British Army, Kinvig's military knowledge and experience made his work unique and convincing in academia.

³⁹ Clifford Kinvig, *River Kwai Railway: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railroad* (London : Brassey's, 1992).

⁴⁰ Flower, p.232.

⁴¹ Kratoska, p.6.

Charles A. Fisher's journal article 'The Thailand-Burma Railway' in *Economic Geography*, probably the first academic work on the railway, was published in April 1947, focusing on the railway's geographic and economic aspects. Geographic knowledge of the jungled region is essential to comprehend the difficult situation in which the POWs and the IJA servicemen were put. The region's topography affected the railway route plan, and the monsoon climate influenced the railway building. As Fisher put it, "As in the wider aspect of strategy, so in the more restricted matter of railway construction, monsoonal conditions imposed a marked rhythm on activity."⁴² Indeed, the roadless jungle limited communication, and torrential rains and floods often cut the transport. Without supplies, hunger and tropical diseases distressed the POWs and the labourers there. The detail of their hardships and the analysis from medical aspects will be delineated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Geoffrey V. Gill's doctoral thesis 'Coping With Crisis: Medicine and disease on the Burma Railway 1942-1945'⁴³ provides a professional medical perspective regarding the medical treatments for the POWs. As a medical professional, Gill has the experience of treating FEPOWs and has conducted clinical and medical research about the ex-POWs at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM). Also, Gill could make the most of medical reports and articles written by the POW medical officers who had attended the POWs. Thus, the former medical officers' papers published in medical journals and the ex-POWs' statements at the LSTM make Gill's work far more valuable in the field of the POWs' health issue.⁴⁴

Rosalind S. Hearder's doctoral thesis 'Careers in Captivity'⁴⁵ gives an insight into the role that the Australian medical officers played. Hearder's thesis, based

⁴² Charles A. Fisher, 'The Thailand-Burma Railway', *Economic Geography*, 23.2 (1947), 85–97, p.89.

⁴³ G.V. Gill, 'Coping with Crisis: Medicine and disease on the Burma Railway 1942-1945', (LSTM, 2009).

⁴⁴ Gill, 'Coping with Crisis', p.104.

⁴⁵ R.S. Hearder, 'Careers in Captivity: Australian Prisoner-of-War Medical Officers in Japanese Captivity during World War II' (University of Melbourne, 2003).

on many interviews with the former Australian medical officers, is unique for its focus on the medical officers' special status over the combatant officers.

Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson edited the book *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History*,⁴⁶ which consists of chapters written by Australian and Japanese historians, ex-POWs and a Korean guard. Based on various sources and interactions with the Japanese scholars, McCormack and Nelson have a little different view on the subject from other Western scholars.

Nevertheless, while providing a good overview of the subject and expertise in a specific area, these works are still within the scope of limited sources, primarily due to their little access to Japanese documents and literature. The scholarly works in the English-speaking world are based mainly on ex-POWs' memoirs and post-war reports made by the Allied officers, lacking different perspectives. As a result, such studies share biased, stereotyped narratives told by the ex-POWs and hence have a weakness in the area of the IJA's decision-making process that the POWs could not see. Therefore, this thesis's primary method is to utilise Japanese sources to reconstruct a comprehensive account. With the IJA documents, Chapter 1 will explore what the Japanese intended in commencing the railway project.

Reliability of Japanese sources

Western scholars often think that the IJA's important documents and records were destroyed before the surrender and, if any, regard them as unreliable. Especially, concerning the number of the POWs' deaths on the railway, the IJA's record is thought to have undercounted the number on purpose. However, in Chapter 3, it will be found that the IJA's records are still available and reliable enough to draw the reality of the POW camps. Indeed, the Japanese documents were submitted to the Allied authorities and the war crimes courts. Even the 'authoritative' report of the SEATIC (South East Asian Translation and Interpretation Centre), authored by C.C. Brett, Canadian Intelligence Corps, refers to the Japanese documents.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson (eds.) *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History*, (St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

⁴⁷ TNA PRO WO208/970, 'SEATIC, No.246, Burma-Siam Railway, Publication

Chapter 3 will compare the Allied reports with the Japanese documents regarding the POWs' total strength and death toll on the railway and ascertain whether there existed a significant difference between the two sides. In fact, the IJA's peculiar practice called *inzu-shugi* or the counting-number principle played a crucial role in keeping their records, which is little known to Western scholars. *Inzu-shugi* can work as a different angle to draw satisfactory explanations about the events on the railway. Without the knowledge of the IJA's practice, the Japanese behaviour looked 'irrational' on the railway from the POWs' perspective. Accordingly, the question about why the Japanese behaved 'irrationally' has remained unanswered. In this respect, Flower argues that:

[N]o one has produced a satisfactory explanation of precisely why, on at least one occasion, the Japanese sent POWs into the virgin jungle during the monsoon season, without medical supplies or cooking equipment, to build a camp for a thousand men with two axes, two billhooks, one pick and a broken shovel.⁴⁸

Also, Kinvig comments that:

It seems clear that the human tragedy of the railway experience will not fade away; indeed it is an aspect of Japan's 'dark valley' which deserves to be more widely acknowledged, researched and explained.⁴⁹

This is why the narratives of the Japanese, who planned and carried out the railway construction, should be studied closely. The IJA's servicemen's memoirs and testimonies can provide a clue to the explanation for their 'irrationality'.

Japanese Account

The Japanese official history is an essential source to grasp the Japanese account.

8 October 1946'. This thesis calls this report the Brett report.

⁴⁸ Flower, p.247.

⁴⁹ Kinvig, 'Allied POWs and the Burma-Thailand Railway', p.57.

The Center for Military History in the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) published the Military History Series (*Senshi Soshō*). The volumes of *The Army Section, Imperial Headquarters*⁵⁰ describe how the decision was made in the IHQ. Interestingly, the official history contradicts the view of Hiroike, the original planner of the railway. More intriguingly, according to Tokuichi Asai, Hiroike helped the Center for Military History by its request to compile the war's historiography.⁵¹ Asai knew of Hiroike's contribution to the institute because he was also helped by Hiroike when writing his second essay on the railway.

In 1953, Asai published the first short essay on the railway, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo',⁵² which was probably the first academic work about the railway in Japan. In 1963, Asai published the second essay, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo Hoi'. His status as an eminent geography scholar and a former administrator in war-time Burma made it possible for Asai to access various sources in the Japanese Government.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the railway is only a minor topic in the official history of WWII. Accordingly, as in Western academia, few scholarly works have been made in Japan despite plenty of sources such as official documents and memoirs of former IJA servicemen. Especially, the decision-making process for the railway project has not been clarified. Thus, chapter 1 will focus on the IJA's decision-making process and sectional confrontations, through which the contradiction between the official history and Hiroike's view will be explained.

Some Japanese scholars have been researching the railway in the context of the war crimes, focusing on the illegality of the POW's labour and the brutality of the Japanese. Aiko Utsumi is a well-known Japanese scholar on the subject, interacting with English-speaking historians such as McCormack. Utsumi provided two chapters, 'Prisoners of war in the Pacific War: Japan's policy' and 'The Korean guards on the Burma-Thailand Railway' to the book edited by

⁵⁰ National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu (The Army Section, Imperial Headquarters)*, Senshi Sōsho (Military History Series); (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1972) IV, pp.316-319.

⁵¹ Tokuichi Asai, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo Hoi', *Shin Chiri (New Geography)*, 10.4 (1963), 1-31, p.1.

⁵² Tokuichi Asai, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo', *Shin Chiri (New Geography)*, 1.4 (1953), 13-19.

McCormack and Nelson. In 1982, Utsumi published a book about Korean guards who worked in the railway camps and were convicted as war criminals after the war, introducing a Korean perspective in the railway narrative.⁵³ Also, Utsumi published a book on the IJA's policy towards POWs in 2005, dealing with the railway in a chapter.⁵⁴ These works focus on the IJA's brutality, irrationality and war crimes committed on the railway, but not their causes.

Hirofumi Hayashi's book on the British war crimes trials against the Japanese has a section about the railway, but it does not go into depth.⁵⁵ Also, Yuma Totani published a book about the war crimes trials both in the Japanese version⁵⁶ and the English version⁵⁷. One chapter of the book deals with trials related to the railway and compares the Japanese official report on the POWs' labour on the railway with the trials' findings and evidence. While mentioning the gap between the Japanese and the British views, Totani does not present any explanations or analyses for the gap.

Notably, the limitation of these scholars' arguments is their reliance on the prosecutors' assertions in the courts. Accordingly, their research would remain within the bounds of the prosecutors' perspective. Their evidence, which was collected, produced and submitted to the courts for the purpose of punishing the former enemy, could be influenced by a particular motive. Chapter 2 will focus on how the trials were conducted and reveal that the trials represented the officers' account as they coordinated the investigations and the trials after the war.⁵⁸

⁵³ Aiko Utsumi, *Chosenjin BC-Kyu Senpan No Kiroku (The Record of Korean BC Class War Criminals)* (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1982).

⁵⁴ Aiko Utsumi, *Nihongun No Horyo Seisaku (The POW Policy of the Japanese Army)* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 2005). Ch.5. Sec.2.

⁵⁵ Hirofumi Hayashi, *Sabakareta Sensō Hanzai: Igirisu No Tainichi Senpan Saiban (Convicted War Crimes: British War Crimes Trials against Japan)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998).

⁵⁶ Yuma Totani, *Futashika Na Seigi: BC-Kyū Senpan Saiban No Kiseki*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015).

⁵⁷ Yuma Totani, *Justice in Asia and the Pacific Region, 1945-1952: Allied War Crimes Prosecutions* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁸ See TNA PRO WO325/157, 'Burma/Siam Railway: Charges against Japanese

Besides, Chapter 7 will discuss problems caused by Colonel Wild's involvement in the investigations and trials.

As Barak Kushner points out, some Japanese have dubious impressions of war crimes trials because of the poorly ascribed evidence in the courts, criticising the trials for the biased legal practice of one-sidedness.⁵⁹ Indeed, while the ex-POWs' statements and affidavits as primary evidence for the trials are also valuable sources for research, they also have credibility problems. Such evidence could contain vague memories, rumours, hearsay, and misunderstandings, exaggerated by animosity against the enemy. Notably, the defence had no means to cross-examine such documentary evidence as the producers were not present in the courtrooms. Thus, Colin Sleeman, the defence counsel in the Gozawa trial, the first British war crimes trial against the Japanese, argues that:

[W]ith affidavit evidence the whole magic of the test of cross-examination is wholly absent, and questioning by the Court obviously impossible. Furthermore, you are precluded from judging the demeanour of the witnesses in the box, and from making deductions regarding their credibility from such observation. So much, then, for the weight to be attached to affidavit evidence as a whole.⁶⁰

Furthermore, it is often overlooked that the war crimes trials could be politicised. For instance, when sentenced to death by hanging, Colonel Nakamura was told by the President of the Court that he would make a recommendation for mitigation. Indeed, the judge sent such a letter to the confirming officer. However, it was dismissed. In the advice to the confirming officer, Brigadier Davies stated that "there is no reason why, since the Court had the power to award any suitable

High Commanders'.

⁵⁹ Barak Kushner, *Men to Devils, Devils to Men: Japanese War Crimes and Chinese Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), p.45; 57.

⁶⁰ Colin Sleeman, *Trial of Gozawa Sadaichi and Nine Others*, (London: William Hodge & Co, 1948), p.213.

sentence, the death sentence should not stand."⁶¹ This fact implies that for some reason, the judge could not give a sentence as he wished. In prison, Nakamura commented that someone responsible had to be hanged for a political reason.⁶² Indeed, judging the accused was not the same as finding out the truth. The findings technically represent a 'legal' and even 'political' truth but not a whole truth.

Advantages and disadvantages of war crimes trials

The flaws and limitations of war crimes trials, often seen as victors' justice, have been a subject of debate among scholars, especially between historians and jurists. Also, the victors' justice perspective influenced the attitude of the Japanese; for instance, while admitting their responsibility for the POWs' plight, the former IJA engineers have had a tendency to glorify their achievement in the railway project. Thus, a considerable perception gap exists between Western jurists and former IJA servicemen. Presumably, this is partly the reason why some scholars avoid using Japanese sources. Accordingly, neither side could provide a complete account of what happened on the railway and what caused the POWs' sufferings.

This thesis will examine the trials' evidence to bridge the different perspectives and explain the causes of the plight. This section will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of war crimes trials to clarify the difference in approaches between history and international law.

The International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo are often regarded as an evolution in international law, providing a legal framework towards establishing the International Criminal Court entered into force in 2002. However, some scholars argue that the tribunals were victors' justice, in other words, unfair trials. In *The Japanese On Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945–*

⁶¹ Shigeo Nakamura, *Tachiagaru Kuni Inoru*, (Kumamoto: Kumanichi Shuppan, 2008), p.92;131-132; TNA PRO WO235/963, Letter of President Forttheythe of the Court, p.27.

⁶² Nakamura's words quoted in Yoshitada Nagatomo's letter to Nakamura's wife, in *Tachiagaru Kuni Inoru*, p.268.

1951, Philip Piccigallo concluded that while flawed, the Allied war crimes operations in the Far East succeeded in upholding ideals of justice.⁶³ For those who upheld the ideals, it was of necessity to establish an international legal order to deter war, and the principles of International Military Tribunals contributed to this objective.⁶⁴ Thus, Piccigallo stated that:

Whether the IMTFE [The International Military Tribunal for the Far East] deviated from that righteous path, and whether victorious Allies unjustly subjected vanquished Japanese leaders to unprecedented trial and charges for political purposes, is—and will continue to be until some modern day Solomon provides definitive answers—a matter of feverish controversy. “Victors’ justice” to one reasonable person is a sincere attempt to expand the scope and application of international law and justice to another.⁶⁵

However, Richard H. Minear criticised Piccigallo’s argument as an attempt to undermine criticism of the Tokyo trial and the many minor trials, further arguing that “This book is not a study of the Japanese on trial. It is a study of Allied war crimes operations in the Pacific as recorded in government publications and reported in the English-language press.”⁶⁶ Minear is the author of *Victors’ Justice*, in which he pointed out the Tokyo trial’s shaky basis in international law with fundamental procedural flaws. It was not on the ideals of international law but on

⁶³ Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Japanese On Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945–1951*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979). Kindle 4341/6752.

⁶⁴ Piccigallo, Kindle, 4259/6752.

⁶⁵ Piccigallo, Kindle, 4247/6752.

⁶⁶ Richard H. Minear, “Review of *The Japanese on Trial: Allied War Crimes Operations in the East, 1945–1951*”, by Philip R. Piccigallo, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 40.1 (1980), 138–40, p.140.

the historical worth of the trial's verdict that Minear saw the trial's validity resting.⁶⁷ As Minear puts it:

The Tokyo Tribunal failed miserably in its attempt to write the history of the prewar years. This failure was in part the result of the tribunal's bias, but it was also in large part the result of the fundamental misconceptions that lay behind the trial and dominated its course.⁶⁸

Minear's point was that the historical process could not yield to adjudication but that the Tokyo trial was based on the fundamental misconception that 'the events at issue could be adjudicated'.⁶⁹

The controversy between processes of historical writing and international law's evolution has lasted for a long time. The difference between courtroom proceedings and historiography was studied by Hedinger and Siemens. In their article "The Legal Moment in International History", the distinct logics and mechanisms and also the complicated relationship between the two disciplines were highlighted.⁷⁰ Hedinger and Siemens pointed out that both Japanese and Western historians tend to be very critical regarding the accomplishments of the Tokyo trial and that its negative image sharply contrasts with the 'human rights revolution', Nuremberg's primary legacy.⁷¹ Although the development of international law and human rights, creating the category of 'crimes against humanity', led to the establishment of the International Criminal Court, Hedinger and Siemens argue that while new legal categories were explored in Nuremberg

⁶⁷ Richard Hoffman Minear, *Victors' Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.125-6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.158.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.159.

⁷⁰ Daniel Hedinger and Daniel Siemens, 'The Legal Moment in International History: Global Perspectives on Doing Law and Writing History in Nuremberg and Tokyo, 1945–1948. Introduction', *Journal of Modern European History*, 14.4 (2016), 492–99.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.495.

as well as in Tokyo, an international perspective does not necessarily shape globally shared or mutually accepted narratives because “Writing history both in court and also afterwards relied on a wide variety of local, regional, national and transnational factors without having to establish a clear hierarchy among them.”⁷²

Yuma Totani, a Japanese historian, aiming at enhancing the Tokyo trial's historical reputation, regards the trial as a contribution to the development of international criminal justice beyond "victor's justice". Also, Totani views the trial as a “victims’ trial”, as smaller Allied nations such as the Philippines were included.⁷³ However, the victim’s inclusion as a judge in the trial raised doubts about the trial’s impartiality.⁷⁴ Sellars suggests that “Tokyo was the very blackest of courtroom dramas, with an abundance of sombre lessons for jurists as well as for politicians and historians. It is to be hoped that future generations will pay heed to them.”⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the significance of the Tokyo trial can be seen in the development of the negative criminality doctrine, in other words, the principle of civilian cabinet responsibility for war crimes. As Boister and Cryer put it, “The establishment of command responsibility for civilians was an important part of the trial, but the outer ambit they set of cabinet liability was excessive and led to questionable convictions in some cases.”⁷⁶ Although the principle could raise a controversy, it does sustain international law today. Notably, as Cohen and Totani point out, the Nuremberg judgment did not use the 'failure to prevent war crimes'

⁷² Ibid., p.499.

⁷³ Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: The Pursuit of Justice in the Wake of World War II* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), p.12.

⁷⁴ Milton Cantor, “Review of *Victors’ Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*”, by Richard H. Minear, *The American Journal of Legal History*, 16.4 (1972), 369–73, p.371.

⁷⁵ Kirsten Sellars, ‘Imperfect Justice at Nuremberg and Tokyo’, *European Journal of International Law*, 21.4 (2010), 1085–1102, p.1102

⁷⁶ Neil Boister and Robert Cryer, *The Tokyo International Military Tribunal: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), p.330.

as a criminality ground, whereas the Tokyo trial's jurisprudence influenced the ICTY and the ICTR indicting persons in a position of authority.⁷⁷

Futamura explains that the lack of centrally given criminal orders in the Japanese wartime decision-making structure necessitated the Tokyo trial focusing on the 'negative criminality' for punishing those who had failed to prevent the commission of war crimes.⁷⁸ Futamura views wartime Japanese policies as complex and incoherent, quoting a Japanese historian, Iokibe Makoto: Japan's war effort was 'not the matter of the existence of cool-headed and evil "conspiracy" but the matter of its nonexistence'.⁷⁹

Thus, it can be said that the Tokyo trial set evolution in international law moving towards universal individual rights and responsibilities, whereas the trial's flaws emanating from its political nature often caused controversies, keeping historians away from this field. Arguably, the US Government's policy towards the trial hampered historical research of this subject. Mei Ju-ao, a Chinese judge in the Tokyo trial, once pointed out that the trial was neither independent nor international but a subsidiary of the GHQ, in other words, the Americans, in terms of administration and personnel.⁸⁰ Thus, on ending the trial, as Mei recalled, the Americans transported the trial's archives to the US War Department, making them the exclusive property of the US.⁸¹

Furthermore, Futamura suggests that "The documents and materials of the Tokyo Trial were collected and examined for the purpose of judicial procedures; that is to prove the guilt of the defendants, not for the pursuit of factual truth per se."⁸² Thus, it is often said that the trial is 'a practical enterprise' with a judgment,

⁷⁷ David Cohen and Yuma Totani, *The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal: Law, History, and Jurisprudence* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.514.

⁷⁸ Madoka Futamura, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.89.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Futamura, p.88.

⁸⁰ Mei Ju-ao, *The Tokyo Trial and War Crimes in Asia* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan., 2018), p.101.

⁸¹ Mei Ju-ao, p.118.

⁸² Futamura, p.92.

having to side with either of the two narratives presented in the end, whereas historical investigation or historiography, which is essentially academic, allows for ambiguity.⁸³ Nevertheless, Priemel and Stiller argue, a trial and historiography are 'mutually susceptible to their respective insights' because contemporary historians have amply used legally generated sources, while lawyers have used historiographical expertise to interpret or fill a gap of evidence.⁸⁴

In *Beyond Victor's Justice?: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited*, Finnin and McCormack conclude that "Contemporary distancing from the Tokyo model of victor's justice or distancing from Tokyo's relatively diminished commitment to fair trial rights are both reflective of the progressive evolution of international criminal justice."⁸⁵ The important lesson from the Tokyo trial was to guarantee a fair trial with non-partisan approach to justice, avoiding "victors' justice". Thus, the establishment of the ICC, a permanent court with general jurisdiction, represents an 'important breakthrough'.⁸⁶ Here, the trials at Nuremberg and Tokyo can be seen as 'transitional justice' with three types embraced – 'judicial trials, purges and history lessons'.⁸⁷

Although, after the war, the military tribunals were held to designate individual responsibility for acts committed during the conflict, Lingen points to a cultural aspect of the Tokyo trial, the first 'interracial and multilingual criminal trial', where

⁸³ Kim Christian Priemel and Alexa Stiller, 'Introduction', in Priemel and Stiller (eds.) *Reassessing the Nuremberg Military Tribunals: Transitional Justice, Trial Narratives, and Historiography*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p.4.

⁸⁴ Priemel and Stiller, p.5.

⁸⁵ Sarah Finnin and Tim McCormack, 'Tokyo's Continuing Relevance', in *Beyond Victor's Justice? The Tokyo War Crimes Trial Revisited*, ed. by Yuki Tanaka, Timothy L.H. McCormack, and Gerry Simpson (Brill Nijhoff, 2011), pp.355-6.

⁸⁶ Finnin and McCormack p.354.

⁸⁷ Priemel and Stiller, p.3. The three types are mentioned as Timothy Garton Ash's identification.

not only struggles but constant negotiations were conducted.⁸⁸ Thus, as Lingen suggests, it is important that “research takes a closer look at the impact of the different cultural, linguistic, political and legal traditions of the various participants on the tribunal’s planning and operation.”⁸⁹ Thus, international military tribunals should be impartial, multilateral and fair, whereas historical and cultural studies are necessary to interpret the war crimes and ascertain the offenders’ responsibilities.

Although this thesis mainly focuses on the trials conducted by the British, not the Tokyo trial, these advantages and disadvantages can be applied to analyse the historical narratives and the court evidence. Here, cultural differences between the British and the Japanese also play an essential role.

Officer-men Relations

Differences in perspective also existed among the POWs. Especially, the division between the officer POWs and other ranks can provide another different angle to the subject. The following passage from Flower’s work gives a hint on this matter.

There have been numerous first-hand accounts published by POWs on the Burma-Thailand Railway, but few have come from men who held positions of responsibility within the camps in which the prisoners employed on the project were held. [...] The prevailing interpretation has been to disparage the officers as a caste, an ideologically inspired approach which, it can be argued, has distorted both the history of POWs on the railway, and the general history of Allied servicemen in Japanese hands during the Second World War.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Kerstin von Lingen, ‘Introduction’, in Kerstin von Lingen (ed.) *Transcultural Justice at the Tokyo Tribunal: The Allied Struggle for Justice, 1946-48*, (Brill, 2018), p.1.

⁸⁹ Lingen, p.2.

⁹⁰ Flower, p.227

While Flower's work implies frictions between the officers and the ranks, the proceedings and evidence of the war crimes trials do not give any impression that such frictions existed. Presumably, it was because most evidence submitted to the courts was produced by officers, who coordinated the trials well. Thus, there was little room for the ranks' accounts in the trials. Instead, many non-officer POWs published their memoirs after the war, which provide numerous first-hand accounts of the railway.

Nevertheless, Flower's point is that those accounts coming from those who were not in responsible positions in the camps are less accurate and that the officers' accounts are more trustworthy and closer to the truth owing to their responsible positions. However, the same logic can be applied to the relationship between the POWs and the Japanese. The latter was responsible for the railway project and the camp administration. Either account of the officers or the ranks is too simplified to comprehend the complicated reality on the railway. However, recognising the officer-men division among the POWs can work as an additional line to analyse the complication.

The officer-men division resulted from their different objectives. The officers should be more loyal to their duty than the ranks because, in general, commissioned officers have a strong sense of compliance and responsibility to their duty. Thus, even during the captivity, the officers try to inflict the maximum damage to the enemy's war effort by trying to escape or sabotage the work. On the other hand, the ordinary POWs' primary objective was survival. Thus, the wages paid by the IJA were necessary for them to buy extra food from local vendors and keep their motivation for life. Notably, the officers were paid an allowance by the IJA. The difference in attitudes towards the railway construction between the officers and the ranks will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the officers were caught in a dilemma between their loyalty to disturb the enemy and their responsibility to protect their men. The best way to protect the men was to cooperate with the captor. Thus, some POW commandants, who had to negotiate with the Japanese, often adopted a 'limited cooperation' strategy so that they could maintain good terms with the captor. As a result, such commandants succeeded in protecting their men but were

often criticised as 'Jap Happy' by other officers.⁹¹ Interestingly, the flexible POW commanders had had work experience in civilian sectors before they became captive, whereas the strict officers were usually career military personnel who had a sense of honour and desired success in their military career. Thus, it is reasonable that many officer POWs tried to avoid dishonour – cooperating with the enemy.

Compared to the officers' dilemma, ordinary POWs' thirst for survival seems human and straightforward. Indeed, the ranks worked well, and the Japanese engineers were quite surprised at and praised the quality of their work. For instance, with the Japanese engineers' instructions, a POW party became able to lay 5 km of the railroad per day.⁹² However, it is also true that some POWs were determined to continue their sabotage and disturbances of the construction. They worked as slowly as possible and made the railway as weak as possible. Some POWs caught a bucket of termites and put them in a pillar of a wooden bridge.⁹³ Thus, the ranks could shape their episodes quite frankly and differently from the officers' reports to the authorities.

Other differences

Other divisions can also be found among the POWs, especially between combatant officers and medical officers, subalterns and senior officers, and the British and the Australians. Notably, these divisions make it possible to draw more comparisons and analyses of the railway narratives. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will deal with how these divisions and cultural factors affected the POWs' health. Especially, the significant difference between the British and the Australians will be analysed in Chapter 6.

Also, divisions can be found inside the IJA that sent two different units to the railway construction: the Railway Corps and the POW Camp Administration. The

⁹¹ W.P. Hall, 'Preface', in Alfred E. Knights, *Singapore and the Thailand-Burma Railway*, (Bury St. Edmunds: Arena, 2013), p.11.

⁹² Hiroike, p.179.

⁹³ Jack H. Leeman, 'Kofuku na Anahori (Happy Digging)', in Nagase (ed.) *Kuwai Gawa Horyo Bochi Sosaku Ko*, p.119.

objective of the former was to complete the railway construction on the order of the IHQ. On the other hand, the latter was under the instruction of the Ministry of War (MOW) to administer the POWs' matters. The relation between the two was never a smooth one. The IJA's organisational shortcomings and differences in perspective will be discussed in Chapter 1.

Besides, the IJA employed local labourers for the railway construction. Notably, the labourers, under the Railway Corps administration not the POW Camp, did not have any particular supporting organ. Furthermore, the labourers were never monolithic: generally, they aimed to earn wages, but Burmese labourers were organised by Ba Maw's government to cooperate with the Japanese. Thus, the labourers' behaviours varied and were often different from those of the POWs or the Japanese. In Chapter 3, the reality of the labourers will be ascertained.

Each group on the railway had its behavioural tendency according to its culture. Therefore, the more groups got involved on the railway, the more complicated their relations became. Consequently, the whole picture of the railway was a mosaic of complication, where the dichotomy between the POWs and the IJA is not valid. Accordingly, this complication fostered misunderstandings between the different groups.

F Force and its atrocity effect

Among the different groups on the railway, F Force POWs' view has become dominant in popular history, the press, and academia for their extreme sufferings. Indeed, F Force was the most unfortunate POW party of 7,000 men, whose death rate was over forty per cent. Thus, the episodes shaped by the F Force men were reported by the press with sensation, and thus the 'atrocity' has placed the F Force narrative at the centre of the history of the railway. Notably, Colonel Wild, a former senior interpreter of F Force, played a crucial role in forming this F Force factor as he led the war crimes investigation team after the war. The previous scholarly works have not dealt with the impact of the F Force factor and Wild's involvement on the existing official account. Therefore, this thesis will evaluate the impact. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, F Force's tragedy and its influence will be explored in detail. Especially, the appropriateness of Wild's involvement in the

war crimes trials will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

Since the release of the famous film, numerous books have been published by ex-POWs in the forms of diaries and memoirs, shaping the railway's episodes. However, their straightforward views had some disadvantages in the complicated reality on the railway. The POWs could misunderstand facts as they could not see the whole picture or the backgrounds of events. Indeed, the POWs were not fully informed of the details of the railway project, which was a military secret, and thus were unable to explain the causes of their plight. Therefore, as Flower puts it, "the principal fault in many of the personal accounts is that one of the staples of POW life - rumour - seeps so frequently into the narratives."⁹⁴

Besides, a publication in the mass media went through a process of simplification. Ex-POW authors may have wished to let the public know how harsh their situation was and how they survived, and a media company may have wanted the public to know and buy their products. Accordingly, they would need some simplification for the public to grasp the story; in other words, dramatisation, where an academic examination of facts is not expected.

The officer POWs were also involved in a simplification process by producing reports and evidence for the war crimes trials after the war.⁹⁵ The trials' objective was to punish the Japanese war criminals, for which evidence was collected and produced. In the process of the trials, irrelevant information was excluded. The evidence, submitted to the courts only to prove the guilt of the accused, may represent a 'legal' and 'political' truth but not a whole truth.

In reality, there were some friendly episodes between the POWs and the Japanese, which were not to be included in such a truth in the courtroom as they had nothing to do with punishing the war criminals. However, such friendly episodes should be a part of the whole truth. In diaries and memoirs of ex-POWs,

⁹⁴ Flower, p232.

⁹⁵ In Tarumoto's trial, 28 affidavits were submitted, of which 15 were by officers. In the prosecution of Ishida and four others, 65 affidavits, statements and reports were submitted, 46 of which were by officers.

some friendly episodes can be found. Thus, specific backgrounds and facts were intentionally or unintentionally omitted in the shaping of an episode through the trials.

Besides, neither the popular history based on the memoirs nor the official account based on the trials reflects the views of the Japanese. As a result, no one could explain why the Japanese behaved inefficiently or irrationally on occasion. For instance, at a trial, an ex-POW testified that:

If we had been given adequate food, better drugs and had not been hurried out to works so hurriedly, the railway would have been completed much sooner and done much better, the reason being that there would have been fewer sick men and therefore more men and more fit men available for work in the railway.⁹⁶

Likewise, Dutch international lawyer B. Röling, a former judge of the Tokyo Trial, mentioned in an interview with Antonio Cassese that:

It was estimated afterwards that the railway could have been finished more than a year earlier if the Japanese had given a bit more attention to the labourers' health and well-being. What the Japanese did was not only criminal, it was also stupid.⁹⁷

However, the Japanese could not act as the Westerners thought as rational. Why was it not possible? One of the primary objectives of this research is to answer this question and draw a comprehensive picture of the reality on the railway by combining various groups' perspectives.

Despite the widespread attention directed at the railway, little is known to the public and historians concerning how the construction of such a notorious railway started and who made the construction plan. In fact, in the initial plan, POWs

⁹⁶ Gale's testimony quoted in Kratoska, p.53.

⁹⁷ B.V.A. Röling, *The Tokyo Trial and Beyond: Reflections of a Peacemonger* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p.77.

were not to be employed as the workforce, which even the Japanese official history does not mention. Why is such an important fact of the railway project unknown to the public and academia? The following chapters set out from illustrating the background and the decision-making process of the project to explore potential answers.

In Chapter 1, three main features of the IJA will be discussed: indecisiveness in making decisions, vagueness in policies, and opaqueness in decision-making processes. The IJA's characteristics often make it difficult to clarify where responsibility lies. Japanese documents and sources will unravel the IJA's obscurity mechanism that influenced the POWs' fate on the railway.

Chapter 2 will deal with a difference in perception between the British and the Japanese and delineate their different cultures and characteristics. A clue will be drawn from the trial of Tarumoto, a railway platoon commandant, who was known as one of the cruellest Japanese and thus charged with the brutality. His trial and memoirs make it possible to compare the conflicting viewpoints. This comparison will reveal the characteristics of the British officers who coordinated the trial. Eventually, Chapter 2 will ascertain that the war crimes trials were the driving force to shape the official account of what happened on the railway.

Chapter 3 will discuss Japanese sources' reliability by examining the difference in statistics between the Allied reports and the Japanese documents. Notably, the IJA's peculiar practice, *inzu-shugi*, played an important role in keeping POWs' records as accurately as possible. Nevertheless, keeping the records of Asian labourers was difficult for various reasons, such as labourers' rackets.

Chapter 4 will analyse what caused the POWs' health problems, where the differences in diets and lifestyle between the captive and the captor become a significant factor. Notably, the POWs found it difficult to adapt their taste to the rice diet. Thus, the Japanese obsession with rice, which had induced beriberi in the IJA since its foundation, necessarily affected the POWs' health. Also, other medical aspects, including the disruption of transport and supplies during the monsoon season, will be discussed. Understanding the differences in culture will be crucial to comprehend the whole situation on the railway, although few scholars have approached the cultural matters.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will deal with F Force's tragedy and its influence on the railway's historiography. The prevailing account of the railway tends to reflect former F Force members' views for their tragic suffering. Significantly, the forced march over 300 km during the monsoon had a devastating effect on their physical conditions, which will be delineated in Chapter 5. After arriving at the camps, cholera broke out. Besides, medical treatments were hopelessly insufficient, and thus many POWs died of cholera, malaria, dysentery and other diseases. Chapter 6 will focus on the medical aspects of F Force's tragedy and analyse the reason for the higher mortality of the British than the Australians in the same Force. Chapter 7 will examine the role of Wild, one of the most influential figures who formed the British account of the railway. It will be revealed that the evidence that Wild produced for the trials had a credibility problem, and thus Wild's authoritative account needs a thorough review. Accordingly, the 'F Force factor' in the episode-shaping should be adjusted. Notably, F Force exemplifies the atrocity effect that conferred special status to a particular group for its suffering and created gaps with other groups. What is problematic is that the specific group or person's view could influence the war crimes trials and the official account, and hence a credibility question could be raised.

Thus, this thesis will not only present how the episodes of the railway were shaped but also deconstruct the particular groups' narrative more influential than others and reconstruct a comprehensive account of what happened on the railway. As the war crimes trials were a powerful mechanism to shape and consolidate the existing account, examining the trials' findings with other sources will offer different angles on the events.

Chapter 1: IJA

Introduction

The IJA had a peculiar culture, a composite of Japanese values and Western modern military theories and technologies. Thus, Japanese soldiers' behaviours cannot be explained without grasping how the IJA developed their culture in its eighty-year history. In this chapter, how the IJA's peculiar culture influenced the railway construction and the POWs' treatment will be delineated.

Western scholars often attribute the IJA's brutal attitude towards POWs and civilian internees to Bushido. However, if Bushido had caused the IJA's brutality, the Japanese soldiers would have always been inhumane to enemies in every battle and war, and similar war crimes would have been found in its history. In fact, the IJA generally enjoyed a good reputation until WWI for bravery and humanity owing to Bushido.

Thus, this chapter begins by exploring the IJA's history and Bushido's influence on the modern army's code of conduct. Eventually, how the IJA's peculiarity affected the railway construction and the POWs' treatment will be analysed, where the complex of Japanese values, international law and strategic rationality will be disentangled. It will be ascertained that the IJA's indecisiveness, vagueness and opaqueness in making policies and decisions obscured where responsibility resided for the railway project. This obscurity caused misunderstandings between the captors and the captives.

Bushido and IJA

It has been widely believed that the IJA's brutal treatment of POWs was caused by the traditional Japanese attitude of despising surrendered soldiers, considering their right to live to be forfeited, and emphasising loyalty to the Emperor. However, scholars such as Karl F. Friday, G. C. Hurst, C. Holmes and A. H. Ion dismiss the widespread belief. For instance, Friday argues that:

the military tradition of the medieval samurai has very little in common with the "bushido" that was current in the early twentieth century, and does very little to explain the behaviour of the Japanese Imperial Army. Far better clues to the attitudes of the Japanese high command, the officer corps, and the ordinary troops can be found in the specific circumstances of the war, the political atmosphere – both domestic and international – of the 1930s, and the process through which Japan emerged as a modern nation.⁹⁸

Also, Towle dismisses the widespread view regarding the connection between the IJA's brutality and Bushido and points out that the Japanese did not mistreat Russian POWs during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and thus "there was no necessary connection between Japanese bravery and the mistreatment of POWs."⁹⁹ Instead, Towle explains that during the 1930s, Western values became less persuasive in Japan, and such changes were reinforced in the IJA by the 'ferocious guerrilla war' in China and Germany's influence.¹⁰⁰ According to Towle, the German army was traditionally ferocious against guerrillas and civilians supporting them, and the IJA absorbed such a German tradition since the Japanese replaced their French advisors with Germans in the 1880s.¹⁰¹

In the early days of the IJA, the Japanese Government modelled Napoleon's modern army and introduced the French style, inviting French officers as instructors in the 1870s. Thus, the IJA's character was relatively liberal and democratic at that time.¹⁰² However, such a liberal character caused a severe and deplorable event, the Takebashi Mutiny, in 1877 after the Satsuma Rebellion. Of

⁹⁸ Karl F. Friday, 'Bushidō or Bull? A Medieval Historian's Perspective on the Imperial Army and the Japanese Warrior Tradition', *The History Teacher*, 27.3 (1994), 339–49., p.348.

⁹⁹ Towle, p.118.

¹⁰⁰ Towle, p.119.

¹⁰¹ Towle, p.123.

¹⁰² Hiroshi Shinohara, *Rikugun Sosetsushi: Furansu Gunji Komondan No Kage (History of the IJA's Establishment: Influence of French Advisors)* (Tokyo: Riburo Poto, 1983), pp.398-401.

the Artillery Battalion of the Imperial Guards, more than 260 NCOs and soldiers, dissatisfied with their bonus and salary, killed their superior officer and fired a cannon to appeal to the Emperor. Thus, the IJA leaders chose the well-disciplined German style as their model.

In November 1882, when establishing the Military Staff College, the IJA decided to invite a Prussian officer as an instructor, although, at this point, the Military Academy still employed French instructors. In March 1885, Prussian Major Meckel started teaching at the College for three years, during which the IJA began to transform itself into a Prussian-style army. In 1891, the IJA officially amended its drill manual by modelling the Prussian manual of 1888.¹⁰³ Presumably, the Franco-Prussia War influenced the IJA's decision.

When the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) broke out, the IJA educated its soldiers to treat POWs according to international law. At that time, the Japanese authorities never allowed their servicemen to violate international law as the Japanese desired to revise the unequal treaties with Western countries for recovering tariff autonomy and abolishing Western nations' extraterritorial jurisdiction. Then, the Japanese Government thought it necessary to be civilised in a Western way by modernising the country: in short, establishing a constitution, introducing a democratic political system with the Diet, and respecting international law. Thus, in 1886, Japan ratified the 1864 Geneva Convention and employed Nagao Ariga, an eminent international lawyer who had learnt international law in France, as a professor of the War College. Ariga later became a legal advisor for the Chief of the General Staff during the First Sino-Japanese War and published in 1896 a book on the Sino-Japanese War from the perspective of international law in both Japanese and French. Although the Chinese army did not respect *jus in bello* in the war, Ariga states in his book that the Japanese should at least be responsible for their decision to comply with international law regardless of the enemy's conduct.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, Ariga argued that Article 25

¹⁰³ Atushi Ikuta, *Nihon Rikugun Shi (The History of the IJA)* (Tokyo: Kyoikusha, 1980), pp52-4.

¹⁰⁴ Nagao Ariga, *Nisshin Sen'eki Kokusaiho Ron (The Sino-Japanese War from the Perspective of International Law)* (Tokyo: War College, IJA, 1896). p.114.

of the Army Penal Law provided that a prisoner or a surrendered soldier who committed a crime shall be tried by court-martial.¹⁰⁵ Ironically, the IJA's legal education would retrograde in several decades.

Nevertheless, during the First Sino-Japanese War, the IJA's first instruction to avoid surrendering alive was issued by Field-Marshal Aritomo Yamagata. On 29 November 1894, *The Times* reported that:

Field-Marshal Yamagata, Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Korea, has warned his men that they had better not be taken alive by the Chinese, but the warning is accompanied by an exhortation to behave towards captives and wounded with the utmost humanity, and the honour of the troops they appear to observe the exhortation implicitly.¹⁰⁶

Yamagata issued the instruction because the Chinese took no prisoners and showed brutality. *The Times* reported the Chinese brutality as follows: 'from dead, wounded, and vanquished alike they shore off the heads, mutilated them in various ways, and strung them together by a rope passed through the mouth and gullet'.¹⁰⁷ Yamagata's point was to avoid horrific experiences inflicted by the enemy. However, combined with the sense of shame, the instruction gradually developed into the IJA's peculiar principle that soldiers must choose death before captured by the enemy.

After the Takebashi Mutiny, Yamagata, the then Minister of War, issued the *Gunjin Kunkai*, or the Admonition for Servicemen (1878).¹⁰⁸ The Admonition played an essential role in army discipline until 1882. Reminding the servicemen of the 'traditional' samurai warriors' spirit, the Admonition emphasised three essential spiritual elements for the servicemen: loyalty, courage and obedience. Accordingly, even if the superior's order is of absurdity, a soldier must respect it.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.125.

¹⁰⁶ 'The War in Korea' *The Times* (London, 29 November 1894), p.16.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See Masakazu Kawabe, *Nihon Rikugun Seishin Kyoikushi Ko (History of the IJA's spiritual education)* (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1980), Vol.1, pp.54-65.

However, a complaint may be allowed once he has obeyed the order and stands the absurdity.¹⁰⁹ Thus, obedience was never unconditional, and the IJA's concept of absolute obedience was created afterwards.

In January 1881, the *Kempeitai*, the IJA's military police, was formed to maintain soldiers' discipline on battlefields and punish those who violated the military laws and regulations. The *Kempeitai* became notorious during WWII.

On 4 January 1882, *Gunjin Chokuyu*, or the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, was issued by Emperor Meiji, providing an unshakable foundation for the servicemen's spirit. The basic idea of the Rescript was to combine and consolidate various values into one: the Emperor's command, the loyalty to the nation, the harmony between ranks, the spirit of samurai warriors, and morality and ethics. Thus, the Rescript in plain words expressed the five principles based on loyalty, courtesy, courage, truthfulness and frugality. All the Japanese servicemen had to memorise the Rescript as follows:¹¹⁰

Loyalty. Remember that the protection of the state and the maintenance of its power depend upon the strength of its arms. Bear in mind that duty is weightier than a mountain, while death is lighter than a feather.

Courtesy. Inferiors should regard the orders of their superiors as issuing directly from Us [i.e. the Emperor].

Courage. Never despise an inferior enemy, or fear a superior, but do one's duty as a soldier or sailor - that is true valour.

Truthfulness. Faithfulness implies the keeping of one's word, and righteousness the fulfilment of one's duty.

Frugality. If you do not make simplicity your aim, you will become effeminate or frivolous and acquire a fondness for luxurious and extravagant ways.

It was a reaffirmation of values that the samurai warrior class had maintained as a social norm for centuries. As Bushido is the traditional values' generalisation and

¹⁰⁹ Kawabe, Vol.1, p.63.

¹¹⁰ George Forty, *Japanese Army Handbook 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), p27.

artificiality in early modern times, the Imperial Rescript could be said to be based on Bushido.

The most significant point of the Rescript was the Emperor's preachment that 'We are your Commander-in-Chief'. In this respect, Kawabe points out that the Emperor's affectionate words moved all the servicemen so profoundly that they all faithfully complied.¹¹¹ Ikuta also argues that the IJA was greatly indebted to the Rescript for its strength and courage.¹¹² Undoubtedly, the Rescript succeeded in enhancing the soldiers' ethics and discipline by establishing the honourable 'Emperor's Army', which made it possible to transform the servicemen from feudal warriors into the modern army soldiers under a single Commander-in-Chief.

Consequently, absolute obedience began to be demanded under any circumstance as every order was regarded as the Emperor's order as a formality. Kawabe explains that although the concept of obedience originated from the feudal value, the Rescript in the modern military made the concept of absolute obedience feasible and unique only by combining men's loyalty and the superior's affection, not by unimpassioned legal enforcement.¹¹³ In short, the superior must have the entire responsibility for the outcome of his order. Thus, those who carry out the order are absolved of responsibility for their deeds, even if they are illegal. Accordingly, the superior must issue an order with deep consideration, which works as checks and balances in the relationship with the men who have no right to protest.¹¹⁴ This is how Japanese servicemen perceive the consistency between absolute order and legality. However, during WWII, the superior issued orders without profound considerations, and their men followed the orders without doubts.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), things began to change along with modern weaponry development. Having experienced destructive modern warfare, the IJA adopted a new Drill Manual which stressed 'spiritual stamina'.¹¹⁵ Also, the

¹¹¹ Kawabe, Vol.1, p.83.

¹¹² Ikuta, p.44.

¹¹³ Kawabe, Vol.1, p.86

¹¹⁴ Ibid., Vol.1, pp.87-8

¹¹⁵ Ikuta, 1980. P.93.

manual demanded 'offensive spirit' as the basic principle of the IJA, which idealised the concept that a small army could defeat a mighty one.¹¹⁶ In short, the IJA tried to make up for their technological backwardness and shortage of modern weaponry with the 'spiritual stamina' and 'offensive spirit'.

In 1928, the Drill Manual was amended to introduce the concept of 'conviction of victory'. Kawabe explains that the 'conviction' prompted the servicemen to make all necessary efforts and be patient in any circumstances to achieve an impossible goal. Nevertheless, Kawabe admits that the slogan was sometimes abused in a deceptive excuse or covering up deficiencies.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Kawabe pointed out that the fanatic emphasis on spiritual power inevitably resulted in underestimating scientific developments and the enemy's spiritual and material abilities.¹¹⁸

This peculiar mentality was often seen on the Burma-Thailand Railway. The spiritual stamina was firmly pressed when the Japanese servicemen received difficult orders regarding the railway construction. The men obeyed such orders with the notion that the superior must be entirely responsible for the outcome, and those who carried out them would not be responsible even if they were illegal.

However, the IJA's unique mentality did not necessarily lead directly to the brutal treatment of POWs. Indeed, their treatment was known to be humane until WWI: the Japanese captured and treated well 4,461 German POWs, who stayed in camps in Japan for four years.¹¹⁹ Notably, the Japanese tendency to avoid being captured was already found in the Russo-Japanese War.¹²⁰ Thus, the Japanese distinguished the disgrace on themselves being captured and humanity towards surrendering enemies. Shin Hasegawa's book on POWs' history in Japan describes

¹¹⁶ Kawabe, Vol.2. p.37

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Vol.2, p.87.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Vol.2, p.89.

¹¹⁹ Ikuhiko Hata, 'From Consideration to Contempt: The Changing Nature of Japanese Military and Popular Perceptions of Prisoners of War Through the Ages', in Moore and Fedorowich (eds.) *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World War II*, p.263.

¹²⁰ See Shin Hasegawa, *Nihon Horyo Shi (History of POWs in Japan)* (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1979), Vol.1, pp.211-3; 220-2; Vol.2, p.26; 29; 30; 101.

many humane and friendly episodes between the captor and the captive, indicating the popularity of such episodes among Japanese people. In the book, phrases such as 'benevolence is the way of warriors' and 'the compassion of warriors' can be found frequently.¹²¹

However, during the inter-war period in the 1920s and 30s, various domestic and international factors caused a change in the IJA's character. It is often overlooked that, in those days, radical ideologies encroached on Japanese society and the IJA through the conscription system. Thus, the IJA authorities needed to strengthen spiritual education to counter radicalism. Ian Nish comments on such a situation in Japan as follows:

During the period of Taisho Democracy (1912-25), [...] army commanders were particularly worried about the influences present in a changing Japanese society and the possibility that socialist and anarchist ideas would spread to the troops by way of newspapers and pamphlets. However, spiritual education was still on a small scale compared to the late 1930s.¹²²

Therefore, the argument about Bushido as the cause of the IJA's brutality is a stereotype, lacking a view that the IJA repeatedly changed its character due to changes in socio-economic environments, and the IJA servicemen's mentality also varied. Some scholarly arguments ignore the IJA's historical background and the socio-economic factor in Japanese society. For instance, Robert B. Edgerton argues that:

Underlying her [Japanese] display of martial savagery in China, and continuing throughout World War II, was a deeply-rooted sense of inferiority, often acknowledged by soldiers and officers alike.¹²³

¹²¹ See Hasegawa, Vol.1, p.192; 194; Vol.2, p.126.

¹²² Ian Nishi, "Japan, 1914-18", in A. Millett and W. Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness* (Boston; London: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p.242.

¹²³ Robert B. Edgerton, *Warriors of the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese Military*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p.306.

Edgerton's point is that the Japanese thought Chinese and Western cultures were superior to their own and feared and hated Chinese and Westerners. However, what Ian Hamilton observed was quite the opposite of the sense of inferiority. Hamilton witnessed the Russo-Japanese War and commented on Japanese soldiers that:

Military bravery is the one virtue which every Japanese ungrudgingly and spontaneously admires. [...] If the Russians only fight well enough, they will, at this rate, end by gaining the hearts of the Japanese Army.¹²⁴

Hamilton's observation implies that the Japanese despised the enemy who did not fight well. Thus, the Japanese would despise POWs for not having fought well enough.

Based on the view that Japanese people disrespected POWs, some argue that *Senjinkun* or the Field Service Code was the cause of the IJA's ill-treatment towards POWs during WWII. On 8 January 1941, the Code was issued in the name of Minister of War Hideki Tojo. The phrase "Never live to experience shame as a prisoner" was cited so repeatedly during the war that the Code has been regarded as the cause of the suicidal tendency of the Japanese soldiers avoiding humiliation by the enemy. Besides, written in the context of Bushido, the Code is often associated with feudal 'savagery' by Western and post-war Japanese intellectuals, whom the name of Tojo might prejudice. However, the Code was initially planned by Hideo Iwakuro some years before Tojo issued it as the Minister of War. Iwakuro explained that the Japanese soldiers' morale and discipline deteriorated in the continuous battles in China during the 1930s, which necessitated the new code to restore morale and discipline in the IJA.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the Bushido values underlying the Code were not new at all.

¹²⁴ Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War* (London: E. Arnold, 1905). p.265.

¹²⁵ See Hideo Iwakuro, *Showa Rikugun Boryaku Hishi, (The hidden history of the IJA in the Showa period)* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbun Shuppan, 2015).

The Code itself indicates that the IJA's morale and discipline had already deteriorated in China by the time it was issued in 1941. Since benevolence to the enemy was an essential quality of an admirable samurai warrior, one could argue that the IJA servicemen in the 1930s might have been losing Bushido. Masanori Ito, a Japanese military historian, points out that many IJA officers came from the commoners' class at the time of WWII, unlike the Russo-Japanese War and WWI, during which officers usually belonged to the former warrior class.¹²⁶ In short, the loss of Bushido could be a factor in the IJA's brutality during WWII. Thus, the stereotype argument that Bushido or the Code made the IJA brutal by making the servicemen think that POWs 'forfeited all right to any consideration',¹²⁷ is less convincing.

Indeed, the unique Japanese concept of shame led to contempt for those who surrendered without fighting courageously, but benevolence for the weak or losing enemy was one of the fundamental qualities of Bushido, where brutality or ill-treatment was never encouraged. The fact was that in the 1930s and 40s, the IJA officers were losing the traditional values.

The indecisiveness of the IHQ

The POWs' hardship on the railway can particularly be attributed to the IJA's structural or organisational problems. Notably, the IHQ's indecisiveness immensely affected the POW's fate. In this section, how the IJA's decision-making process influenced the railway construction will be explored. Curiously enough, despite the widespread attention directed at the railway, little is known to Western public and historians as to how the construction of such a notorious railway was started and who planned it. Neither is the fact that the POWs were not to be employed as the workforce in the initial plan, which even the Japanese 'official' history does not mention. Thus, the memoirs of Hiroike, the author of the construction plan is worth reading as one of the most important primary sources for the history of the railway. This section will examine Hiroike's account by

¹²⁶ Masanori Ito, *Teikoku Rikugun no Saigo (The End of the IJA)*, (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1973), Vol.2, p.289.

¹²⁷ Russell, p.56.

comparing it with other sources to explain how the IHQ's indecisiveness caused the POWs' plight on the railway.

Hiroike started planning the railway construction with Lt. General Gyotaro Hattori, the then Commander of the Railway Corps, the Southern Army. According to Hiroike, it was on 18 October 1941, and the Corps was on board a ship named *Konan Maru en route* to Hai Phong, Vietnam. Hiroike recalls that on that evening, the idea of the railway construction came across his mind while Hattori and Hiroike were listening to the radio news that Tojo became the Prime Minister.¹²⁸ This moment is the very beginning of the conception of the Burma-Thailand Railway. Hiroike's idea was based entirely on his anticipation that a supply route to Burma would become vital once the war broke out. However, this fact is not compiled in the official history because it was not yet an approved official operation by the IHQ.

When Hiroike started planning the railway construction, the GSO was discussing the war plan as the prospect for a diplomatic solution with the US was dismal. The discussion is described in the memoirs of Shinobu Takayama, a former member of the GSO's Operation Section. Takayama submitted his opinion to the Section Chief, Takushiro Hattori, as follows:

What about, for the time being, making the Southern theatre's war plan on the lines that the Army should secure resources and key bases for transport to establish a long-term undefeatable condition. Plans after that can be flexible.¹²⁹

The Chief approved Takayama's suggestion. It indicates that the GSO was not eager to carry out an ambitious operation such as railway construction. Thus, there was a difference in strategy between the GSO/IHQ and the Railway Corps, which is reflected in the gap between the official account and Hiroike's unofficial account.

¹²⁸ Hiroike, pp.40-1.

¹²⁹ Shinobu Takayama, *Hattori Takushiro to Tsuji Masanobu* (Tokyo: Fuyo Shobo, 1985), pp.90-91.

Thus, it was not until 7 June 1942 that the IHQ issued the order for the Southern Army Command (SAC) to prepare the railway construction with the guidelines as follows:

Guidelines of the Burma-Thailand Railway Construction (IHQ Army Direction)¹³⁰

1. Objective: To secure the supply route on land to Burma as well as a commercial route between Thailand and Burma.
2. Route: Non-Pladuk – Nike – Thanbyuzayat (400km)
3. Transport Capability: 3,000 tons per day in one direction
4. Period: By the end of 1943.
5. Material: Mainly local materials to be used. If necessary, materials are to be sent from Japan.
6. Budget: 7 million yen.
7. Troops: The No.2 Railway Command Unit, two Railway Regiments, one Material Unit, and relevant units to be attached.
8. Workforce: Local labourers and POWs.

Under this direction, the SAC issued the order to the Railway Corps as follows:

The Order of the Southern Army on the Burma-Thailand Railway¹³¹

1. Text of the Order: Based on the Imperial Headquarters Army Command, the Railway Corps of the Southern Army shall prepare the construction of the Burma-Thailand Connecting Railway.
2. Units to be attached: two Army Units; two Constructional Units; two field well-digging companies; one field epidemic-prevention and water-supply unit.
3. 50,000 POWs shall cooperate.

This is the beginning of the railway's 'official' history, and some questions arise

¹³⁰ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, pp.318-9.

¹³¹ Hiroike, pp.111-2.

here regarding the IHQ's order: Why was the order issued amid the rainy season six months after the war broke out?; Why was the order limited to the preparation, not intending the full-swing construction? The IHQ should have issued the order before May when the rainy season usually began in the region. If the construction had begun in the dry season, much better preparation would have resulted in fewer casualties in the construction.

The Railway Corps was ready for the construction long before the order was issued. According to Hiroike, since the Railway Corps Command started planning the construction, he submitted his proposals several times to the IHQ and waited for a cue from Tokyo. Especially, in March 1942, when Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Hajime Sugiyama called at Bangkok, Commander Hattori tried to persuade him to consider the railway construction, but in vain.¹³² Then, Hiroike managed to hand in his proposal to Takushiro Hattori, the Operation Section Chief, accompanying Sugiyama. Hiroike and Hattori knew each other since the Military Academy, and Chief Hattori said to Hiroike that he was sure to pass the proposal to the Railway Section's Chief.¹³³

Having received the IHQ order three months later, Hiroike really felt that the IHQ's indecision led to wasting vital and precious time of the dry season between March and May, causing unnecessary casualties among POWs and labourers, for which the IHQ and the GSO were primarily responsible.¹³⁴ Moreover, Hiroike suspects that the IHQ and the SAC were not serious about the construction and thus half-heartedly issued the 'preparation' order, which denoted their indecisiveness.¹³⁵ Sadamu Kato, the then Chief of Railway Section, later admitted that the GSO should have issued the 'construction' order from the beginning.¹³⁶ The 'construction' order was officially issued five months later, in November 1942. Kato was the person Hattori handed in Hiroike's proposal, and thus Hiroike presumably felt resentment at him.

¹³² Ibid., p.76.

¹³³ Ibid., p77.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p85.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.112-3

¹³⁶ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, p.319.

Hiroike explains how IHQ's indecision caused a problematic situation in the jungle. Notably, the 'preparation' order in June did not include any medical units or motorised units in operation. After negotiation, the IHQ reluctantly gave the Railway Corps a motorised company with only 300 vehicles and ordered two field hospitals to cooperate with the Corps but not under the Corps' command.¹³⁷ Moreover, since the 9th Railway Regiment working on the Thai side could use river transport, all the vehicles had to be given to the 5th Railway Regiment on the Burmese side. Consequently, the POWs on the Thai side were forced to march under challenging conditions.¹³⁸ Furthermore, until March 1943, there were no medical doctors in the Railway Corps Command, and no hospitals were under its control. Thus, the POWs were sent to the construction site without any medical support. Besides, the project budget the IHQ made was only 7 million yen. However, before receiving the order, Hiroike estimated the minimum budget to complete the construction as 70 million yen. Actually, it cost 100 million yen in total, of which 65 million accounted for the wages of labourers and POWs.¹³⁹ Undoubtedly, the IHQ's order to employ labourers and POWs could not be met with that budget. Thus, a question arises about where the IHQ's indecision came from.

No historians have provided satisfactory explanations regarding the indecisive decision-making process in the IJA's upper echelon, despite the IHQ's responsibility for the construction's enormous casualties. The absence of satisfactory explanations can be attributed to the fact that the IJA's official history is to a large extent based on official documents, diaries, memoirs and testimonies made by former members of the GSO or the MOW in Tokyo, not by Railway Corps' staff, railway engineers, or POW Camp personnel. After the war, the official history was compiled by the Centre for Military History, NIDS. Their sources came from the IJA's elite groups – the GSO and the MOW, and many of the compilers were former members of the upper echelon. This biased historiography resulted in the absence of satisfactory explanations, omitting or

¹³⁷ Hiroike, p.114.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.114.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp.118-9.

even ignoring key facts unfavourable or inconceivable to the elites. In short, there exists a large gap between the military elites in Tokyo and the Railway Corps Command in Bangkok.

For the compilation of the war's official history, Susumu Nishiura played a significant role as the first chief of the Centre for Military History. Nishiura served the MOW for a long time, becoming a member of the Army Affairs Section, Military Affairs Bureau, in 1931 after graduating from the War College. In October 1941, Nishiura was appointed the Private Secretary to Minister of War Tojo. After the six-month service to Tojo, Nishiura returned to the Army Affairs Section as the Chief and remained in the position until December 1944. Nishiura was known as one of the three prominent graduates of the thirty-fourth generation of the Military Academy. Another of the three was Takushiro Hattori, the Chief of the Operation Section, GSO. After the war, Nishiura worked for the History Research Section of the Demobilization Bureau and cooperated with Hattori who was working for the History Section of the GHQ, Allied Forces. With Nishiura's cooperation, Hattori successfully published the WWII history book *Daitoa Senso Zenshi*¹⁴⁰ in 1953, whereas Nishiura himself published his memoirs in 1980.¹⁴¹ In 1955, when the then Defence Agency established the Centre for Military History in the NIDS, Nishiura was appointed the Chief of the Centre and started the project of compiling *Senshi Soshō*, or Military History Series – Japan's official history on WWII, which was intended to be used for the education of the newly established Self-Defence Forces. Until the official history was published, Hattori's work was regarded as the quasi-official history of the war. Notably, the documents and sources that Hattori and his team had collected were handed over to Nishiura's office. Thus, Nishiura and Hattori, who had been at the centre of the IJA, were still at the centre of the war history compilation after the war.

Regarding the planning of the railway, the official history states:

¹⁴⁰ Takushiro Hattori, *Daitoa Senso Zenshi* (*Complete History of Great East Asia War*) (Tokyo: Masushobo, 1953) I.

¹⁴¹ Susumu Nishiura, *Showa Sensoshi No Shogen* (*Testimony of Showa War History*) (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1980).

In late December 1941, Chief of Operation Section Takushiro Hattori visited the Southern Army Command and informed that the GSO was planning to start the Burma Operation as soon as possible. This information made the Southern Army Command consider how they could secure supply and communication routes to Burma. A supply route by sea was too long to stabilise in the long term, and thus the construction of the railway between Thailand and Burma could resolve the problem. Thus, the Southern Army started research on the railway project by making an aerial photograph with a scale of 1 to 20,000. In early March, when the Burma Operation was decided, the construction plan was proposed to Tokyo.¹⁴²

The source of this passage is a document entitled 'Railway Military Operation Record'¹⁴³, authored after the war by Major Shigeru Kubota, a former staff officer of the GSO's Railway Section. The 'official' history continues:

In the middle of March, the Southern Army shaped 'Railway Operation Plan for the Burma Operation', in which The Burma-Thailand Railway was included as a prepared plan.¹⁴⁴

This passage is based on 'Ishii Documents', which were kept by Colonel Masami Ishii, Chief of the Operation Section, SAC. It should be noted that the SAC submitted the railway construction plan separately from the Railway Corps Command, which made matters complicated.

According to the official history, the IHQ/GSO's response to this plan was negative. The reason for the disapproval was that:

The Southern Army's research and plan for the construction lacked any real

¹⁴² NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, p316.

¹⁴³ JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records), Ref.C14020320200; C14020323000, 'Railway Military Operation Record(NIDS)'.

¹⁴⁴ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, p316; JACAR, Ref.C14020323000. 'Railway military operation record(NIDS)'.

prospect, especially on materials and labour-power. The Southern Army should continue the research on the matter.¹⁴⁵

This part is based on Kubota's report, which corresponds to Hiroike's recollection that, after the war, he saw a staff officer's document regarding the GSO's disapproval on the ground that the research was insufficient. In his memoirs, Hiroike brought forward a counterargument against the GSO's judgement. Thus, it seems that the official history is entirely based on the elites' perspective from Tokyo. Hiroike's plan was based on his long experience as a railway engineer in Manchuria, and the elites' historiography failed to incorporate his account in the official history. The following section is the summary of Hiroike's plan.

Hiroike's plan

If it started in April 1942, the construction could complete by the end of October 1943, and the railway operation could begin in December 1943. Hiroike estimated that the total work quantity would be 13,707,703 man-days. The labour-power should consist of 50,000 labourers and 10,000 Japanese soldiers, and half of them work per day. Thus, the construction would need 460 days with 30,000 men per day. Hiroike thought that 15,000 labourers could be recruited from each of Thailand, Malaya and Burma. Besides, Hiroike considered the rainy season: from May to September, the work efficiency would be reduced by half; and the construction would experience two rainy seasons, which would necessitate an extra four months. Thus, the construction period would be 19 months in total.

As for the railway materials, the Railway Corps already knew of the Mandalay Railway's existence in Burma, which was a 620-km double track. It could be made a single track to provide 200-km rails to the Burma-Thailand Railway. Also, the Southern Army had no intention to restore the 600-km-long East Malaya Railway, which could provide 350-km rails covering the Thailand side. Moreover, those local railways' existence indicated that there would be factories for the railways' maintenance. Moreover, the region would be full of wooden materials thanks to

¹⁴⁵ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*. Vol.4, p.317.

British colonisation.¹⁴⁶

GSO's custom

While the GSO's negative posture about the railway construction was explained in the official history in terms of the insufficient research, Hiroike was quite confident about his plan, having spent several months for the research. Furthermore, Hiroike points out a severe flaw of the GSO: the then Chief of the Railway Section was from the Infantry Corps. Accordingly, the Chief and his civilian advisors from the Railway Ministry could not have known how military railways should be built.¹⁴⁷ Notably, there was an unwritten rule in the GSO that the Railway Section should not adopt staff officers from the Railway Corps.¹⁴⁸ Thus, ironically, amateurs of railway construction disapproved of the experts' construction plan. This irony ultimately led to the railway's burdensome conditions, where the military elites in Tokyo demanded more spiritual stamina rather than engineering rationality.

Eventually, despite the disapproval in March, the IHQ issued the order on 7 June 1942 to the Southern Army to prepare the railway construction. What made the GSO change its course? The official history briefly explains the background behind the decision as follows:

Although the Southern Army almost abandoned the railway construction after the IHQ disapproved the plan, the new Commander of the Railway Corps, Lt. General Nobuo Shimoda, who substituted his predecessor Lt. General Gyotaro Hattori on 25 April 1942, showed his eagerness to carry out the plan and started to collect materials. As a result, the Southern Army came to promote the project with hope.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Hiroike, pp.83-5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p79.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.405.

¹⁴⁹ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, pp.317-8.

The official history refers to Hiroike's memoirs as the source of this passage.¹⁵⁰ However, in his memoirs, Hiroike states quite the opposite: it was Commander Shimoda who put a brake on the Railway Corps that had already started research and preparation under Commander Hattori without the IHQ's approval.

On 8 March 1942, having heard that the No.15 Army occupied Rangoon, Hattori decided to start preparing for the construction on his authority.¹⁵¹ At midnight on 12 March, Hiroike received at Bangkok the first-ever order on the preparation for the construction from the Commander in Rangoon.¹⁵² Thus, on 15 March 1942, Lt. Colonel Irie, the Railway Corps' staff officer, left Bangkok for field research in the jungle to Thanbyuzayat, Burma, and returned to Bangkok on 30 March 1942.¹⁵³ On 3 April 1942, the Railway Corps had the No.5 Flying Division take an aerial photo of the construction area, which was printed by 10 April. Finally, the Railway Corps needed to make a map of the construction site.¹⁵⁴ The Railway Corps fortuitously seized a good opportunity as the Southern Army's Survey Unit happened to be in Bangkok after their ship *en route* to Singapore was attacked by Allied submarines. Commander of the Survey Unit Colonel Kiyoshi Kato was an old member of the Railway Corps, whom Hattori and Hiroike knew. Kato was willing to take on the job for the Railway Corps.¹⁵⁵ At last, Hiroike obtained the aerial photograph and the map of the construction site shortly after 20 April 1942. Accordingly, the Railway Corps Command at Bangkok worked hard between late April and late May for the project.¹⁵⁶ By the end of April, the Railway Corps became ready to send its troops to the construction site for the preparation. However, Shimoda, the new Commander, did not take Hattori's line, arguing that the preparation so far was all right, but sending troops would cross the line and that they should wait for the superior's order.¹⁵⁷ As a result, the Railway Corps

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p.624.

¹⁵¹ Hiroike pp.86-7.

¹⁵² Ibid. p.88.

¹⁵³ Ibid. p.90.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p.92.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p.93.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.99.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.106.

missed a golden opportunity to start the construction in dry condition.

The official account and its weakness

The official history describes the IHQ's decision as follows:

Burma became a strategically most crucial area after occupying the whole of Burma in mid-May 1942. The IJA's four Divisions were now stationed in Burma, facing the Chinese to the East and the British to the West. Besides, Burma became a politically important partner. However, the prospect for maritime transportation was uncertain because of the activities by the Allied submarines. This situation aroused the importance of Burma-Thailand supply transportation by rail for strategic, political and economic reasons. Thailand also requested Japan to construct the railway. Furthermore, on 5 June 1942, the IJN lost the Battle of Midway. Accordingly, the Army came to consider western theatre as essential and necessary. Considering these factors, the IHQ decided to start the construction, although they still recognised its difficulty.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, except for the 'Midway' factor, every reason mentioned above could be assumed from the beginning, even before the outbreak of the war. The Railway Corps Command noticed the railway's importance before starting the war and thus began planning and preparing the construction without the IHQ's approval. However, the IHQ/GSO disapproved of the construction in March, and hence, the only factor that changed their mind was seemingly the defeat in the Battle of Midway: the naval defeat made the IHQ/GSO recognise the importance of the land route. Indeed, the IHQ issued the 'preparation' order two days after the Navy's defeat.

However, most Army staff officers were not informed of the Navy's defeat as of 7 June. The secret diary of the IHQ of the day states that: "No report has come yet from Midway, but the Western press reports the US Navy's success in the

¹⁵⁸ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, p318.

battle; everyone in the office is worried."¹⁵⁹ In fact, only a limited number of the Army staff were informed of the result. The IJN's first defeat in the Pacific was so devastating and shocking that the NGSO decided to conceal the information. Then, the IJN got in an awkward position whether it should inform the IJA of the defeat. Since the Army partly participated in the operation by sending troops called the Ichiki Detached Force, the Navy had to tell the truth to only a selected few in the Army. In his memoirs, Takayama, a member of the GSO's Operation Section, recalls that:

On the condition of strict secrecy, the Operation Section of the NGSO informed the Army of the defeat on the same day (5 June 1942). The GSO's Operation Section was so shocked that staff were concerned about the war prospect and made to revise the war plan.¹⁶⁰

Takayama's recollection accords with the diary of Chief Shinichi Tanaka of the GSO's Operation Department, according to which Tanaka made a new war policy on 6 June 1942 because of the Midway defeat. The official history quotes the diary as follows:

The Army and the Navy should concentrate on defeating Britain; since it is now difficult to end the war by defeating the US, Japan should find a way out by defeating or making peace with China; a decisive battle with the US in the Pacific should be avoided, and Japan should establish a long-term undefeatable position.¹⁶¹

Thus, it is generally believed that when the IJN lost the naval supremacy in the Pacific after the defeat at Midway, the IHQ/GSO's changed their policy and issued the order for the railway construction to secure a supply route to Burma.

¹⁵⁹ JACAR, Ref.C12120320500 'Secret War Diary(NIDS)', 7 June 1942, kept by Chief Suketaka Tanemura of No.15 Section, GSO.

¹⁶⁰ Takayama, pp136-7.

¹⁶¹ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4, pp.270-1.

However, it was on 8 June 1942 when the GSO officially informed the MOW of the IJN's defeat at Midway, which was recorded by Nishiura, the then Private Secretary to the War Minister. According to Nishiura's memoirs, as of 7 June 1942, no information about the Battle of Midway reached the MOW, and the next morning, the GSO's Operation Section told the MOW that they wanted to send a staff officer to report to Minister Tojo about the battle. The words made Nishiura feel a little strange. In the Minister's office, Minister Tojo, Deputy Minister Kimura, Chief Sato of the Military Affairs Bureau, and Nishiura received the report that the battle ended with the loss of Japan's major aircraft carriers at a stroke.¹⁶²

Interestingly, Tojo did not give this shocking news to cabinet members, including his close follower, Lt. General Teiichi Suzuki, the then Secretary of the Cabinet Planning Board. After the war, Suzuki admitted that it was not until January 1943 that he was informed of the Midway defeat. When Suzuki went to the Palace in January 1943, Lord Keeper of Privy Seal Koichi Kido told Suzuki with his surprise that the Navy had lost the Battle of Midway and that the Navy had reported the defeat only to the Emperor, who did not tell anyone else. Suzuki reported it to Tojo, who replied, "Is that so?" Thus, Suzuki interpreted that Tojo had not been informed of the defeat, either.¹⁶³ Surprisingly, the cabinet members were not informed of the defeat for half a year until January 1943.

Thus, it is not clear how much impact the 'Midway' factor gave on the IHQ/GSO's decision regarding the railway construction. In fact, Takushiro Hattori, the then Operation Section Chief, described the railway construction decision in his work *Dai Toa Senso Zenshi* differently from the official history. In Hattori's work, the brief section about the railway begins with:

A more significant measure was decided and taken in early November 1942 to defend Burma. That is the historical Burma-Thailand Railway.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Nishiura, p.177.

¹⁶³ Teiichi Suzuki, *Suzuki Teiichi-Shi Danwa Sokkiroku* (Suzuki Teiichi's Narrative) (Tokyo: Nihon Kindai Shiryo Kenkyu-kai, 1971), p.204.

¹⁶⁴ Hattori, *Daitoa Senso Zenshi* (Tokyo: Masushobo, 1956), IV. p.332.

Thus, the Operation Section Chief obviously recognised that the IHQ's order for the 'construction' was issued in November 1942 and that the 'preparation' order in June was not the final decision. Hattori explains the necessity of railway construction as follows:

There were two supply routes to Burma; one is a very long sea route, and the other is a very thin land route made by the No.15 Army in February 1942 when entering Burma. The former was now threatened by the enemy's submarines, and the latter was only capable of transporting five or ten tons of supplies a day. However, the troops stationed in Burma increased to four divisions facing counterattacks by the enemy. Because of this risky situation in Burma, the IHQ and the Southern Army continued to discuss the issue of the Burma-Thailand Railway construction since June 1942, with the IHQ's preparation order. At length, in Autumn 1942, the enemy's intensifying counterattacks by sea and air and the necessity to send more troops to Burma made the IHQ issue the construction order in November 1942, despite the anticipation that it would be challenging work.¹⁶⁵

As Hattori was at the centre of the war planning, his words confirm that the IHQ was half-hearted about the railway construction until early November 1942, even after the Midway defeat.

Besides, the half-heartedness can be found in a report made by Chief Kato Rinpei of the GSO's Transport Department at a conference on 9 June 1942, which was recorded in Tanaka's diary as follows:

Now the issue of the Burma-Thailand Railway is progressing. The length of the railway will be 370 km. The construction period will be one year or one and a half. Materials will be obtained locally. One and a half Railway Regiments will be sent, and POWs and labourers will be employed for the

¹⁶⁵ Hattori, p.333.

construction. The budget of the construction is 10 million yen.¹⁶⁶

There are some inaccuracies in the report regarding the construction. The railway's correct length was 415 km, and it was 400 km in the official order. In reality, the IHQ directed that the budget be 7 million yen and that two railway regiments and an auxiliary unit be sent with POWs and labourers. It is intriguing that only two days after the order's issuance, the department heads did not notice the inaccuracies in Kato's report. The inaccuracies might have some influence on the official history's mistake that the CGS issued the first order to the Southern Army on 20 June 1942 regarding the railway construction.¹⁶⁷ These confusions imply that the IHQ/GSO staff were less serious about the construction.

In his memoirs, Hiroike points out the upper echelon's lack of seriousness as follows:

Now that the IHQ decided on the railway construction, my colleagues and I at the Railway Corps Command at Bangkok were expecting the IHQ's or Southern Army's staff officers to visit and talk with us about the construction. However, none of them came to Bangkok for six months after the order's issuance in June.¹⁶⁸ However, once Burma's situation became threatening and the CGS became concerned about it, the IHQ's staff officers came to the construction site and intervened in it, which drew ridicule upon themselves.¹⁶⁹

The IHQ's staff officers were the cream of the elites in the IJA. Once they made a decision, it had to be treated as an absolute order from the Emperor. Thus, their indecisiveness after the 'preparation' order considerably influenced the railway and POWs' fate by wasting safer construction opportunities.

In fact, the IHQ elites were preoccupied with something other than the railway

¹⁶⁶ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4 p.318.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.318.

¹⁶⁸ Hiroike, p.112.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.113.

construction at that time. The Railway Corps could not see the situation in Tokyo. What was going on behind the curtain of the IHQ? The elites in Tokyo were taking time to dispute the 'shipping problem' because, from the beginning, the IJA and the IJN lacked ships, without which any operation could not be carried out in the war. Besides, sectionalism in the military made the matter worse: the IJA, the IJN, and the Government were opposed to each other regarding the strategy and the military administration. Ryoichi Tobe et al. point out that the IHQ Council and the IHQ Staff Conference, which were held to coordinate strategies and operations between the Army and the Navy, ultimately lacked a superior organ to make decisions when an agreement could not be reached between the two. The same deficiency could be found in the Liaison Conference Between the IHQ and the Government, which was aimed to coordinate between the Supreme Command (the IHQ/GSO) and the Administration (the Government/MOW).¹⁷⁰ Regarding the flaw of the Japanese military organisation, Tobe et al. explain that:

The Japanese military organisation was based on the 'Japanese Communitarianism', in which human relations per se were regarded as most valuable to make the organisation and individuals have symbiotic relations. Thus, relationships among individuals should be considered more important than the organisation's objectives, rationale and systematic measures to achieve them. [...] Such communitarianism of the Japanese military often caused severe delays in decision making at the start and the end of operations and thus brought about serious failures.¹⁷¹

Thus, the military elites were preoccupied with sectionalism before going to the enemy. Notably, the confrontation between the IJA and the IJN regarding the grand strategy became more intense after the successful first phase of the war. The Army and the Navy had a staff conference on 6 February 1942 to discuss the draft

¹⁷⁰ Ryoichi Tobe and others, *Shippai No Honshitsu: Nihongun No Soshikironteki Kenkyu (Root of Failure: Study of IJA's Organisation)* (Tokyo: Daiyamondosha, 1984), pp.227-8.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.222.

of "The Guiding Principles for the War Thereafter", which had been proposed by the Navy.¹⁷² According to Tanemura, who kept the IHQ's secret diary, the Navy was planning to expand the front to the South by invading Australia. However, the Army opposed the further expansion of the front in the second phase of the war and insisted on preparing for the enemy's counterattack and defending the occupied areas by mobilising natural resources. Besides, the Army always paid much attention to the northern fronts in China and Manchuria.¹⁷³ Thus, it was not until 28 February 1942 that both the Army and the Navy agreed to a new draft. However, on 2 March 1942, the Navy requested an amendment of the phrase 'for establishing a long-term undefeatable condition' to 'for repelling the US and Britain'.¹⁷⁴ On 4 March 1942, senior officers of the Army and the Navy held a conference to discuss the amended draft, which was approved at last. On 7 March 1942, at a Liaison Conference between the IHQ and the Government, the draft was approved. On 13 March 1942, the Guiding Principles for the War Thereafter was reported to the Emperor with signatures of the Prime Minister, the CGS, and the Chief of the Naval General Staff.¹⁷⁵ However, the Guiding Principles were just a compromise and still contained strategic contradictions and risks of further confrontations. For instance, the Guiding Principles stated as follows:¹⁷⁶

1. For the purpose of Britain's submission and breaking down the US's will, Japan should take a policy to expand the present military achievement and to establish a long-term undefeatable condition by being offensive when necessary.
2. Japan should make efforts to establish a self-sufficient condition and strengthen her war potential by securing the occupied areas and transportations between them, promoting the development of crucial natural

¹⁷² Suketaka Tanemura, *Daihon'ei Kimitsu Nisshi (IHQ's Secret Diary)* (Tokyo: Fuyo Shobo, 1985), pp152-3.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p153.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p154.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.154-5

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

resources for her defence.

3. Further offensive policies will be decided by considering Japan's capability, operations' results, the German-Soviet War, the US-Soviet relation, China's situations, and so on.

In short, while the Army planned a long-term defensive strategy, the Navy wished a short-term offensive/decisive strategy. In this respect, Tanemura comments that although the war's initial achievements were outstanding in the Southern theatre, the IJA's GSO was still preoccupied with how they could end the war in China.¹⁷⁷ In other words, while the Army was looking at the Northern fronts, the Navy was looking at the Southern fronts for a short-term decisive battle as the Navy insisted from the beginning that three years would be the limit to fight against the US.¹⁷⁸

The confrontation between the IJA and the IJN influenced the 'Shipping Problem' and ultimately the IJA's indecisive decision-making regarding the railway construction. Moreover, the 'Shipping Problem' caused a severe confrontation between the GSO and the MOW in the IJA. The problem became severe and conspicuous from late February to early March 1942. Indeed, Japan suffered from a severe shortage of ships throughout the war, which began to interfere with military operations and civilian imports of goods. Accordingly, political fights over ships escalated among the IJA, the IJN and the Government. Tanemura's diary states that the 'Shipping Problem' became more acute on 2 March 1942, when the Cabinet Planning Board demanded that the Army return ships obtained by requisition. The Army failed to implement the agreement made at a Liaison Conference between the IHQ and the Government in late October 1941: as of 1 March 1942, the Army and the Navy must return a certain number of bottoms every month. On 2 March 1942, the Cabinet Planning Board reminded the Army of the agreement as it had not returned any ship yet.¹⁷⁹ Interestingly, Prime Minister and War Minister Tojo insisted that the Army should abide by the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.155.

¹⁷⁸ Takayama, p.84.

¹⁷⁹ JACAR, Ref.C12120320200, The Secret War Diary, 2 March 1942; Tanemura, p.154.

agreement, which had already been reported to the throne. However, the GSO tried to avoid it.¹⁸⁰

The 'official' history describes this problem in detail. On 25 February 1942, at the Liaison Conference of the IHQ and the Government, the Ministers of Interior, Agriculture and Communication respectively reported that ship shortages were so severe that people's living was at risk. The GSO responded that although the Army would consider such domestic problems, it could not change its war plan. Then, Tojo demanded that the Army and the Navy return ships used excessively by requisition: 120,000 tons of bottoms by the Navy and 40,000 tons by the Army. The GSO answered that it was impossible to return the ships in the final and crucial phase of the Southern Operation.¹⁸¹

On 2 March 1942, at the Liaison Conference, CGS Sugiyama reiterated the Army's position but added that his office was making efforts and had sent the No.3 (Transport) Department's Chief to the Southern theatre to reduce the Army's cargo and increase goods and resources for the civilian purpose.¹⁸² Notably, Chief Kato of the No.3 Department in charge of ships and railways of the IJA was in the Southern theatre in early March to deal with the shipping problem. Making every effort to secure the IJA's ship bottoms, it is unlikely that Kato would consider the Burma-Thailand Railway construction, which would require additional shipments to transport the materials.

Besides, on 4 March 1942, the GSO issued an order to the Southern Army to start the Burma Operation. However, it was on 9 February that the SAC ordered its subordinate Divisions to prepare for the Operation. On 11 February, having visited the Southern Army for the inspection, Chief Tanaka of the No.1 (Operation) Department required his superior, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Moritake Tanabe, to issue the order by 23 February. In short, the Southern Army had to wait for the cue from Tokyo for three weeks. The Burma Operation's delay

¹⁸⁰ Tanemura, p.154.

¹⁸¹ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1970) Vol.3. p.494-5.

¹⁸² Ibid. p.496.

was because the GSO needed to ascertain the outcome of the shipping problem.¹⁸³

On 7 March 1942, at the Liaison Conference, the CGS clashed with the Prime Minister. Due to an agreement made in the previous year, the Army had to return 500,000 tons of ship bottoms by 7 July 1942. However, the Army demanded that it should be reduced to 200,000 tons because 300,000 tons were still needed for the operations in Burma and the supplies for the Burma-Thailand border area. The Secretary of Cabinet Planning Board showed a compromise that it could be reduced to 300,000 tons. However, Prime Minister Tojo suggested that 500,000 tons be set today for the moment, and a final decision could be made later. Then, Tanabe answered 'No' and that the Army would stop the Burma Operation. Also, Sugiyama argued that, without precise figures, the Burma Operation should not be decided. Then, Tojo and the Navy Minister compromised to take necessary measures for the Army.¹⁸⁴

Amid the tough negotiations over ships, the project of the Burma-Thailand Railway construction was unlikely to be presented as it could have affected the GSO's position. Indeed, the 'Shipping Problem' shook the Army's strategy to establish a long-term undefeatable position with resources transported from the Southern area. Thus, the Shipping Problem could be a factor of the Army's indecisiveness and delays on specific operations in the Southern theatre, including the railway project.

China and Manchuria

Furthermore, at that time, the GSO's primary concern was still in China and Manchuria facing the Soviet Union, while Japan was fighting against the US and Britain in the Southern theatre. Thus, having inspected the Southern Army from 21 March and 8 April 1942, Sugiyama reported to the Emperor on 9 April that the operations were progressing favourably in the Southern theatre and the Army was gaining the basis for a long-term war. The report implies the GSO's return to its original position, as Sugiyama continued as follows:

¹⁸³ Ibid. p.392.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. pp.496-7.

Now is the time to end the war in China by using this success as leverage. Also, the Empire should be prepared for a possible war against the Soviet Union as the prospect of the Soviet-German war was uncertain.¹⁸⁵

The point was that the Army should guard Manchuria against the Soviet Union and end the war against China as the Southern front was primarily dependent on the Navy's efforts. Indeed, the redeployment of troops to the Northern front was under consideration. Thus, the period between April and June 1942 was a transitional period towards the next phase of the war. Under such circumstances, the GSO was unlikely to decide to construct the railway, considering that the Southern theatre was no longer the Army's top priority and that the battles against the US and Britain were mainly the Navy's business. Indeed, no operations were feasible without the Navy in the Southern theatre. Thus, the Army wanted more Navy presence in the Indian Ocean to carry out the Burma Operation and defend the newly acquired territory.

On 9 March, the NGSO issued an order to the Southern Fleet to initiate the Operation Towards Ceylon, whose primary objective was to guard maritime transport for the Burma Operation. Nevertheless, the Navy regarded the Pacific as the main theatre of the war as their war objective was to defeat the US Navy as soon as possible in a decisive battle in the Pacific. Thus, on 26 January 1942, the Navy informed the Army of a plan that after destroying the enemy's supply route in the Indian Ocean in March, the Navy would carry out an operation towards Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia. It was called the F/S Operation, the start of which was expected between late March and early April 1942, depending on the transport of the Army.¹⁸⁶

Under the circumstances, the Burma-Thailand Railway project might have given the Navy a good excuse to disengage or reduce its presence from the Indian Ocean. At any rate, the F/S Operation was postponed and eventually cancelled because of the Navy's defeat at Midway on 5 June. Notably, on 7 June, the day the postponement of the F/S Operation was decided, the IHQ issued the 'preparation'

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.538-540.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p.450.

order of the railway construction.

Thus, the Railway Corps made an untimely proposal to the IHQ in March 1942, when the GSO was dealing with the Burma Operation, the Shipping Problem, and the Guiding Principles of the War Thereafter. Moreover, the Army's concern began to move to China and Manchuria. However, in June 1942, the Army began to recognise the necessity to defeat Britain and make peace with China, and Burma became strategically more important than ever for the IJA. Furthermore, the IJN's defeat at Midway meant losing sea control, making the maritime transport to Burma troublesome before long. At last, the railway construction became the only option to secure a supply route to Burma.

Nevertheless, even after the order's issuance, a piece of information clouded the GSO's mind. On 12 June 1942, the IHQ was informed that the Soviet Union and Britain had signed an agreement for their military alliance. The GSO seriously considered preparing for a possible war against the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁷ Because of these changes in war conditions, the GSO could not decide until 29 June 1942 the Southern Army's new mission, which had been discussed since March.¹⁸⁸ The basic principle was that:

The Southern Army must establish a self-sufficient, undefeatable condition by securing vital areas in the Southern theatre and be prepared for operations in any circumstances.¹⁸⁹

Thus, the IHQ's indecisive decision on 7 June 1942 to issue the 'preparation' order for the railway construction should be read in the context of being 'prepared for operations in any circumstances'.

The vagueness of the IJA's POW policy

Besides the GSO's indecision, the vagueness of the MOW's policy affected the Allied POWs' lives on the railway. Since the War Minister was in charge of POW

¹⁸⁷ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu*, Vol.4. pp.271-2.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.291.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

matters, the policy was made by the MOW, an elite group of the IJA. In this section, the vagueness of the POW policy will be clarified.

The vagueness could first be seen in the Doolittle Raid. On 18 April 1942, sixteen B-25 US bombers led by Lt. Colonel James H. Doolittle carried out the first-ever airstrikes on Japan's major cities. Although the damage was subtle, the airstrike influenced Japan's war policies, exposing a defect in Japan's anti-aircraft defence system. In his memoirs, Kenryo Sato, the then Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, MOW, recollects that because of the airstrike, the Navy made haste to the Battle of Midway to secure Japan's air supremacy, despite the Army's strong opposition. Sato blamed the Navy for its impetuosity, comparing the IJN's Combined Fleet to a Grand Champion Sumo Wrestler lured by an acrobat, Doolittle, out to Midway to be defeated.¹⁹⁰ Then, the Doolittle Raid raised an issue about how his eight men, captured in China after the attack, should be treated. Fifteen Doolittle planes reached China after the air raid, but all of them crashed; only one plane landed in Russia safely. Of eighty airmen, three died, and eight were captured by the Japanese. Of those captured, three were executed by the Japanese, and another died in prison: the other four survived the war.¹⁹¹

The Japanese authorities charged Doolittle's eight airmen for having injured civilians and killing a schoolboy by the machine-gun shooting at a school. The US Government inquired after the airmen to the Japanese Government through the Swiss Embassy. On 17 February 1943, through the Swiss Ambassador, the Japanese Foreign Minister sent a reply drafted by the MOW, saying that:

The US aircrafts attacked civilian facilities away from military installations such as hospitals and schools. Especially, their machine-gun shooting at a schoolyard injured pupils and killed one. The American airmen admitted the

¹⁹⁰ Kenryo Sato, *Dai Toa Senso Kaikoroku (Memoirs on the Greater East Asian War)* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1966), p.243.

¹⁹¹ 'The Doolittle Raid—18 April 1942', *Air Power History*, 39.2 (1992), 3–5., p.3; Arville L. Funk, 'The Doolittle Raid Journal of Sgt. George E. Larkin, Jr., 1942', *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 83.2 (1985), 108–22., pp.108-10.

school shooting and justified their conduct, for which the Japanese authorities could not regard them as POWs but as criminals.¹⁹²

The letter continues that Japan would treat enemy soldiers as POWs if they did not commit atrocities. In fact, four Americans who had bombed Hong Kong were treated as POWs and interned in the Shanghai POW Camp by the IJA, which was reported to the Swiss Embassy on 30 March 1943.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, in the Tokyo Tribunal, the prosecutor accused the IJA of the 'illegal' execution of the American airmen.

It is relatively unknown that the MOW had a confrontation with the GSO regarding the treatment of the Americans. According to the official history, the GSO insisted on punishing the Americans most severely to deter further airstrikes. However, the MOW opposed severe punishment as the Emperor unofficially expressed his request that the Americans be treated with consideration.¹⁹⁴ While the GSO saw the incident from a strategic perspective, the MOW cared for international reputation and the Emperor's will. The Emperor's official record states that there was disagreement among the Prime Minister (the Minister of War), the Foreign Minister, and the CGS regarding the treatment of the Americans.¹⁹⁵

Since the MOW had the legal authority and responsibility for POW matters, the GSO thought that if the Americans were not given the POW status, the GSO could intervene in the issue as an operational matter. The IHQ's Secret Diary on 21 May 1942 states that:

¹⁹² JACAR, Ref.B02032456200. Documents relating to Greater East Asia War/ Military situation/ Air raid of US planes in Japan(A-7-0-0-9_7_1) (Diplomatic Archives of MOFA).

¹⁹³ JACAR, Ref.B02032455900. Documents relating to Greater East Asia War/ Military situation/ Air raid of US planes in Japan(A-7-0-0-9_7_1) (Diplomatic Archives of MOFA), pp.277-278.

¹⁹⁴ JACAR, Ref.C12120320400, 'Secret War Diary', 6 May 1942.

¹⁹⁵ Imperial Household Agency, *Showa Tenno Jitsuroku (The Record of Emperor Showa)*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2015). Vol.8, pp717-8.

Regarding the American POWs issue, we will handle it with a further study following the Emperor's will. If a decisive measure is to be taken, its legality will be a matter. Our prepared plan is to use the Court-Martial.¹⁹⁶

After negotiations, the GSO and the MOW agreed that a new military discipline should be formed to handle the American 'war criminals', but some of the accused should be commuted by the Emperor before being executed. In his memoirs, Sadao Akamatsu, the then Private Secretary to Prime Minister Tojo, recalls that the mitigation was all arranged by Tojo. However, Tojo testified at the Tokyo trial that the Americans had been tried in the Court-Martial as a formality and commuted in actuality by the direction of the Emperor, who had respected international justice. Listening to Tojo's testimony on the radio, the Emperor told his medical doctor that Tojo was protecting him by telling a lie as if the Emperor had arranged everything about the mitigation.¹⁹⁷ While in the most responsible position as the War Minister to handle the matter, Tojo was most eager to save the Americans in deference to the Emperor's wish.

The Doolittle Raid's episode indicates that there was no coherent policy regarding POWs' treatment between the GSO and the MOW. Indeed, the IJA's had regulations regarding POWs' treatment under the MOW's jurisdiction, whereas the GSO was independent of the Government and beyond the MOW's control. Such a relation led to the vagueness of the POW policy, especially in front lines.

On the Burma-Thailand Railway, the GSO ordered the Railway Corps to construct the railway, and the MOW had responsibility for the welfare of POWs. Thus, the rivalry between the two bodies inevitably brought about ambiguity in treating the POWs on the railway. Furthermore, the Southern Army made the matter more complicated as the POW camps in the Southern theatre were under the control of the SAC that was under the GSO's command. Thus, the vagueness

¹⁹⁶ JACAR, Ref.C12120320400, 'Secret War Diary', 21 May 1942.

¹⁹⁷ Sadao Akamatsu, *Tojo Hishokan Kimitsu Nisshi (Secret Diary of Tojo's Secretary)* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1985), p.201.

of the IJA's POW policy was closely related to the complicated decision-making process. Nevertheless, the MOW had at least an intention to comply with international law.

MOW and International Law

On 12 February 1942, three days before the fall of Singapore, the Army Affairs Section, the Military Affairs Bureau, MOW, sent a request to the Southern Army's Chief of Staff:

For the Malay Operation after the fall of Singapore, we would like you to submit your plan as to when, where and how the Southern Army would establish POW camps and the estimated round number of POWs, which would be a yardstick for the formation of POW camps. As to the Ministry's position about the POWs' treatment, please refer to the previous correspondence *Gunji Den* (The Army Affairs Section's Telegram) No.439.¹⁹⁸

In *Gunji Den* No.439 on 12 December 1941, the MOW issued its POW policy as the Instruction to Chiefs of Staff of the Expeditionary Army to China and the Southern Army in the name of Chief Akira Muto of the Military Affairs Bureau. The instruction read as follows:

In this war, POWs shall be treated in conformity to international law, and their internment camps will be locally established and administered by the army commander there. For these purposes, the Ministry is to revise the present regulations of POW camps and others. Thus, you should start research and preparation as to where and how the camps will be established.¹⁹⁹

This instruction indicates that the MOW intended to treat POWs under

¹⁹⁸ JACAR, Ref.C01000068900. Rikuamitsu Dainikki, Vol.4, 2 of 2, 1942(NIDS).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

international law. Indeed, the Japanese Government and the MOW newly established some organisations and amended some regulations to deal with POW matters. For instance, on 20 December 1941, the establishment of the Zentsuji POW Camp in Kagawa, the Shanghai POW Camp, and the Hong Kong POW Camp was announced. On 23 December 1941, the Order of POW Camp was issued. On 27 December, the POW Information Bureau was established under the MOW's authority according to Article 14 of the Hague Convention and Article 77 of the Geneva Convention. During the war, Japan had nine orders and regulations about the treatment of POWs.

1. The Order to establish POW Camp (The Imperial Order No.1182) issued on 23 December 1941.
2. The Order to establish the POW Information Bureau (The Imperial Order No.1246) issued on 27 December 1941.
3. The Regulation on POWs Treatment (The Instruction of the Ministry of War No.22) issued on 14 February 1904 with some amendments afterwards.
4. The Detailed Regulation on the Treatment of POWs (The Instruction of Ministry of War No.29) issued on 21 April 1943.
5. The Regulation on POWs' Labour (The Instruction of Ministry of War No.139) issued on 10 September 1904 with some amendments afterwards.
6. The Regulation on the Allowance for POWs (The Instruction of Ministry of War No.8) issued on 20 February 1942.
7. The Regulation on the Dispatch of POWs (The Order of Ministry of War No.58) issued on 21 October 1942.
8. The Law of the Punishment of POWs (Law No.41) issued on 9 March 1943.
9. The Rule of the Treatment of internees in the Army's hand (Rikuamitsu No.7391) issued on 7 November 1943.

Thus, the popular argument that, having had unique values in their mind, the Japanese had no intention at all to respect international law in handling POWs is untenable. As Friday puts it:

In early 1942, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Togo Shigenori, formally announced Japan's intentions to abide by the standards set by the Geneva Prisoner of War Conference of 1929, even though Japan had never formally ratified the treaty. Clearly then, Japanese philosophy – traditional or otherwise – on the rights of prisoners of war does little to explain the subsequent abuses of captured allied troops. A better source for this kind of behaviour can be found in the more immediate circumstances of the war.²⁰⁰

The problem was that there remained vagueness in Japan's 'conformity to international law': having ratified the 1907 Hague Convention, it did not ratify the 1929 Geneva Convention for some reason.

Some scholars such as Utsumi view Japan's intention with sceptical eyes on the ground that the phrase 'conformity to international law' was not included in the Imperial Rescript on Declaration of War against the United States and Great Britain issued on 8 December 1941, although the phrase was included in the draft.²⁰¹ Utsumi thinks that the omission of the phrase in the Rescript denoted disrespect for international law and that it resulted in POW abuses by the IJA soldiers and prison guards who had not been taught international law.

However, the official history explains that the phrase was deleted at the Rescript drafting conference because it was too obvious to mention. The deletion was insisted by the Chief of the Naval Military Affairs Bureau and a diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).²⁰² Thus, the official history rules out the 'omission' argument as "nothing but a post-war popular belief."²⁰³ Utsumi recognises this official account as she cites it in an endnote of her work.²⁰⁴ However, Utsumi seems to regard Japanese official documents and accounts as unreliable. Instead, Utsumi frequently refers to testimonies made at the Tokyo

²⁰⁰ Friday, p.347.

²⁰¹ Utsumi, *Nihongun No Horyo Seisaku*, p.168.

²⁰² NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu: Dai Toa Senso Kaisen Keii (The Army Section, Imperial Headquarters: Details of the Opening of the Greater East Asian War)*, (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1973), Vol.5. p.542.

²⁰³ Ibid., pp.542-3.

²⁰⁴ See Utsumi, op. cit., p.228.

Tribunal, including Ryukichi Tanaka's.

It is well known that Chief Prosecutor Keenan cooperated with Tanaka, the former Chief of Soldier Affairs Bureau. After the trial, Tanaka admitted that his testimonies had been aimed at achieving his political end – to save the Emperor from indictment by burdening a limited number of individuals with substantial responsibilities for the war.²⁰⁵ Utsumi cites Tanaka's testimonies without thoroughly examining their reliability and accuracy. In fact, Tanaka's statements made for war crimes investigators contained not a few inaccuracies, including misunderstandings about the Burma-Thailand Railway and the POWs matters.²⁰⁶ Regarding the MOW's POW policy, Tanaka made a statement as follows:

In early 1942, a meeting of War Ministry's section chiefs was held. In that meeting, Minister of War Tojo ordered Lt. General Mikio Uemura, the Chief of Information Bureau, and Major General Kenryo Sato, the Chief of Military Affairs Bureau, to make POWs work for the reason that Japan was in a state of labour shortage. [...] Moreover, Tojo told Uemura that he had no intention to treat POWs in accordance with the Geneva Convention.²⁰⁷

At the Tribunal, Tanaka testified the same, which Utsumi cites to support her argument.²⁰⁸ However, as Utsumi mentions in the endnote, Tojo testified that Tanaka's testimony was incorrect because Tojo only gave formal approval to Uemura's proposal in the conference.²⁰⁹ The discrepancy between the two should have been examined thoroughly as the Japanese Government neither completely ignored the Geneva Convention nor fully conformed.

Mutatis mutandis

²⁰⁵ Ikuhiko Hata, *Showa Shi No Gunjintachi (Military Officers in the Showa Period)* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1982), p.99.

²⁰⁶ Ryukichi Tanaka, *Tanaka Ryukichi Jinmon Chosho*, ed. by Kentaro Awaya et al., (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1994), pp.210-214.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.193-4.

²⁰⁸ Utsumi, op. cit. p.193.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p.240.

On 3 January 1942, the British Government made an inquiry to the Japanese Government through the Argentina Embassy in Tokyo whether Japan would apply the 1929 Geneva Convention to the Allied POWs. Japan replied on 29 January that she would apply '*mutatis mutandis*', meaning 'with necessary amendments'.²¹⁰ What Japan meant was that she would comply with the Convention as long as it did not conflict with her interest but that she was not legally bound by the Convention as her domestic law was given priority over it. However, it is widely accepted that the Allied nations interpreted Japan's *mutatis mutandis* as equivalent to the Convention's ratification. Ikuhiko Hata, a prominent Japanese military historian, supports the view that Japan's intention of *mutatis mutandis* was misinterpreted by the US and Britain.²¹¹

However, a document suggests a different view. When protesting against the execution of a British national in Shanghai by the Japanese, the British Government stated that although the Japanese Government took an attitude that Japan's domestic laws would prevail when they conflicted with the 1929 Geneva Convention by applying *mutatis mutandis*, a domestic law conferring death penalty to an escapee was against all the principles of humanitarianism and customs of civilised countries.²¹² Thus, the British fully understood what the Japanese meant by *mutatis mutandis*.

In principle, Japan's application of *mutatis mutandis* could be clarified, but in practice, there remained vagueness in the Japanese authorities' attitude regarding on what occasion the domestic laws would override the Convention. Indeed, how POWs should be treated was never detailed to the IJA officers and soldiers on the battlefields.

Moreover, the Doolittle Raid influenced the mind of the Japanese authorities. In particular, the IJN was concerned that the Convention would make it possible for the enemy aircraft to double their flight distance if they could land Japan's

²¹⁰ JACAR, Ref.C13070714200(NIDS). 'Reply of the Imperial Government of Japan to the British Government's Inquiry on the Treatment of POWs'.

²¹¹ Hata, 'From Consideration to Contempt', p.264.

²¹² JACAR, Ref.C13070714500(NIDS). 'Enemy states' protest against our treatment of POWs based on *mutatis mutandis* to the 1929 Geneva Convention'.

territories as POWs after air raids.²¹³ This is why the NGSO and the GSO insisted that Doolittle and his men be severely punished to deter further strikes. In this respect, Kyoichi Tachikawa, a historian at the NIDS's Military History Centre, argues that the Doolittle incident changed the IJA's view on POWs' treatment and influenced the Outline Regarding the Treatment of POWs issued on 5 May 1942.²¹⁴

On 5 May 1942, the Commissary General's Office issued the Outline Regarding the Treatment of POWs Captured in the Southern Area. This outline consists of five-point policies as follows:²¹⁵

1. White POWs should be used as a labour force for our production's expansion and military purposes and thus be interned in camps in Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria, and China. Those who have no evident suitability should be interned in camps that will be established locally.
2. Non-white POWs who need no detention should be soon liberated under oath and, if possible, be employed locally.
3. By the end of this August, some of the POWs in Singapore should be transferred to camps in Korea and Taiwan. The number will be decided later. The POWs who will be transferred to Taiwan should include excellent engineers and senior officers (Colonel and above), except those needed at their current locations.
4. The rest will be interned in camps that will be established locally.
5. The guards of the newly established camps will be recruited from Koreans

²¹³ JACAR, Ref.B04122508600. International Red Cross Meeting/ Geneva Meeting on Red Cross Treaty Revision and Prisoner of War Code Compilation (1929)/ Ratification and Accession to Treaty/ Vol.2(B-10-11-0-7_1_2_002) (Diplomatic Archives of MOFA).

²¹⁴ Tachikawa Kyoichi, 'Nihon no Horyo Toriatsukai no Haikei to Hoshin (The Japanese Treatment of Allied POWs: Background and Policy)', International Forum on War History 2007, NIDS, 2008, 74–100., p.83.

²¹⁵ JACAR, Ref.C13070714700(NIDS). 'Outline Regarding the Treatment of POWs in the Southern Area'.

and Taiwanese and organised as special units. [...]

Notably, as of May 1942, the Japanese were determined to use the Allied POWs for some labour, depending on ranks, skills and localities. Such determination was also expressed on 30 May by Tojo, who visited the Zentsuji POW Camp for inspection. Tojo gave an instruction encouraging strict camp management within the purview of humanitarianism. Moreover, Tojo stated that as Japan's current situation could not allow anyone to eat without working, prisoners should work substantially.²¹⁶ Furthermore, on 25 June 1942, at the Conference for Newly-Appointed POW Camp Commanders, Tojo instructed that:

Our country has a different notion of POWs from Western countries, which might naturally cause a difference in POWs' treatment. Regarding the treatment, the camp commanders must comply with the laws and regulations and show our empire's righteous attitude to the world. Besides, within the purview of humanitarianism, you commanders must strictly supervise POWs and never allow them to eat without working for a single day. You must make use of their abilities and skills to expand our country's production. By doing so, you must make efforts to contribute to the Greater East Asia War.²¹⁷

However, Tojo's instruction could be in discord with international law that stipulated that officer POWs shall be exempted from manual labour against their will. Thus, the instructions' vagueness confused the staff of the Railway Corps and the Thai POW Camp. Hiroike recollects in his memoirs that when he heard of Tojo's instruction from Major General Sassa, the Commander of Thai POW Camp, Hiroike wondered if they could force officer POWs to work or they should make officers work voluntarily.²¹⁸ Furthermore, Hiroike states that the Railway Corps did not receive any order, direction or instruction about POWs' treatment, except

²¹⁶ JACAR, Ref.C06030130900. 1942, No.14, Rikuafu Dainikki(NIDS), 'POW Monthly Report No.5 by POW Information Bureau, 5 July 1942'.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Hiroike, p.183.

for an instruction in the name of Tojo that the treatment of POWs must be fair, and those who committed a beating on POWs would be punished severely.²¹⁹ Hiroike's reminiscence indicates that the Railway Corps had no idea at all about how to treat POWs as the words such as 'fair' and 'humanitarian' are a little too vague as a policy.

Indeed, the IJA had no consistent principle to deal with the POWs. For instance, Australian officer POWs were exempted from working on the railway because the Australian Navy, with the full naval honours, had cremated the remains of the Japanese servicemen who had attacked Sydney Harbour by midget submarines in June 1942 and returned them to Japan. In return for Australia's highest tribute to the enemy servicemen, the IJA exempted the Australian officers from working, whereas the British officers were forced to work on the railway. Captain Tufnell reported this fact after the war.²²⁰

Southern Army's involvement

Along with the GSO's indecisiveness in the railway project and the MOW's vagueness in the POW policy, there was opaqueness in the IJA's decision-making process for the railway construction. Notably, the Southern Army's involvement in the project seems to have made the decision-making process complicated.

While the IHQ/GSO was initially reluctant to construct the railway, the SAC repeatedly appealed to the GSO to approve the railway construction. As mentioned above, in the middle of March 1942, the SAC submitted to the IHQ a proposal called 'Railway Operational Plan for the Burma Operation', in which a plan of the Burma-Thailand Railway was included. The proposal suggested that 20,000 Thai officials, POWs and local labourers be employed in total in the construction.²²¹ Thus, it was the SAC that first planned to employ POWs in the railway construction. This proposal was substantially different from Hiroike's plan

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.182.

²²⁰ TNA PRO WO208/1925, Report of Captain Tufnell, RN on the Experiences of 161 British and Australian POWs.

²²¹ JACAR, Ref.C14060097500(NIDS). 'Railway operational plans accompanied with the Burma Operation'.

as the former suggested that only a part of the 5th and the 9th Railway Regiments be assigned to the construction. Presumably, Hiroike did not know about the SAC's proposal as he severely criticised the IHQ for ordering the Railway Corps to use the POWs in the construction. Also, it should be noted that, at first, the MOW was not positive about the POWs' employment in the project.

An official Thai document confirms the SAC's intention to employ POWs in the railway construction. According to the document, on 23 March 1942, Lt. Colonel Kazuo Iwahashi, the Chief Staff Officer of the SAC's Railway Section, visited the head of the Thai-Japanese Liaison Office in the Thai Army's Supreme Command. Iwahashi requested the Thais to recruit Thai engineers and 3,000 labourers for the railway construction, while the Japanese would provide Japanese engineers and POWs.²²²

Notably, the Railway Corps did not plan the POWs' employment in the construction, but the SAC did. Although the Railway Corps was placed under the command of the SAC, there seems to have been disconnection between the two. Consequently, Hiroike thought that the IHQ/GSO had conceived the POWs' employment in the railway construction. However, the fact is that they only approved the SAC's proposal.

On 18 May 1942, the SAC's Chief of Staff sent a telegram to the Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau regarding the establishment of POW camps in Thailand as follows:

Although no official agreement was made yet with the Thai Government on establishing POW camps in Thailand, no problem is so far expected (as a thousand Indian POWs are at present working in a camp in Bangkok). For the construction of the Burma-Thailand Railway, 20,000 POWs are expected to work, which will be necessary indeed.²²³

²²² Toshiharu Yoshikawa, *Taimen Tetsudo: Kimitsu Bunsho ga Akasu Ajia Taiheiyo Senso (The Thai-Burma Railway: the Asia Pacific War revealed by secret documents)*, (Tokyo: Yuzankaku, 2011), p.35. Thai document [Bok.Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/1].

²²³ JACAR, Ref.C01000377500. Rikuamitsu Dainikki, Vol.22, 1 of 3, 1942,

On 20 May 1942, the MOW in the name of Deputy Minister Kimura, sent back a reply to the SAC, as follows:

Regarding the establishment of POW camps in Thailand, an organisational preparation is now proceeding to meet the Southern Army's request. However, the Southern Army should immediately negotiate with the Thai Government because the Thais' face should be saved. Otherwise, troubles might occur afterwards, as was seen in French-Indochina.²²⁴

On 23 May 1942, the SAC sent again a telegram to the MOW, requesting that the MOW should talk with the Thais about the establishment of the following three POW camps: (1) Banun, 5000 POWs; (2) Kanchanaburi, 5000 POWs; (3) along the River Kwai, 10,000 POWs. The POWs were to be employed in the railway construction.²²⁵ However, on 26 May 1942, the MOW replied that as it would complete the organisational preparation by the end of the month, the SAC had to negotiate with the Thai Government and report the result immediately.²²⁶ On 1 June 1942, the Southern Army reported that:

The Southern Army proposed to the Thai Government unilaterally. The Southern Army's opinion is that the Thais should not interfere in this matter.²²⁷

These communications between the SAC and the MOW correspond to Thai records. According to a Thai document, on 31 May 1942, the IJA officially offered to construct a new railway station in Non-Pladuk and asked the Thais to send representatives to the station. On 1 June 1942, the IJA formally requested

(NIDS), p.5.

²²⁴ Ibid. pp.3-4.

²²⁵ Ibid. pp.9-10.

²²⁶ Ibid. p.8.

²²⁷ Ibid. p.11.

permission to establish POW camps in Bang Pong, Kanchanaburi, and the River Kwai, which would be used for the Burma-Thailand Railway construction. The Thai Army's Supreme Commander did not oppose this request but ordered to have a discussion at the Command. On 8 June 1942, a Thai-Japanese joint conference was held, in which the IJA asked the Thais to cooperate in obtaining a site for the new railway station, recruiting labourers, and purchasing certain materials. Besides, the Japanese requested Thai railway personnel and Interior Ministry officials. The Thais replied that they would deal with these requests and inquired about the construction plan. The Japanese responded that they were now discussing the plan with the IHQ, and the construction was not decided yet.²²⁸

It should be noted that the IHQ's 'preparation' order was issued on 7 June 1942, around which the negotiations were continuing between the Thais and the SAC. Thus, it seems that in the mind of the IHQ and SAC, the construction was not finally decided. Notably, the SAC actually had an initiative in the railway project and the POWs' employment, whereas the IHQ/GSO and the MOW played only passive roles: the IHQ/GSO were still indecisive about the construction, and the MOW had only arranged organisational preparations to meet the SAC's request.

Thus, a question arises as to why the SAC did not inform the Railway Corps of their construction plan. In his memoirs, Hiroike describes that Chief Iwahashi of the SAC's Railway and Ship Section was the only friendly and cooperative staff officer in the SAC as they had maintained a friendship since the Military Academy and that Iwahashi was the only staff officer in the SAC who understood the strategic importance of the Burma-Thailand Railway.²²⁹ Indeed, Iwahashi was originally from the Railway Corps. However, in early May 1942, Iwahashi moved out from the SAC, and hence the communication between the Railway Corps and the SAC presumably became less frequent. This was a harmful aspect of the IJA's personnel affairs system in which positions would change every two years, making the policy-making process inconsistent. Consequently, the IHQ's inconsistency, the SAC's proactive involvement in the railway project, and the distance between the Railway Corps and the SAC caused opaqueness in the decision-making process.

²²⁸ Yoshikawa, pp38-9. Thai document [Bok.Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/1].

²²⁹ Hiroike, p.49.

Notably, the tripartite relationship among the IHQ, the SAC and the Railway Corps was never a smooth one. Futamatsu, a senior railway engineer, observed that the Railway Corps Command had difficulty proceeding with the construction due to the lack of support from the IHQ staff members, who were frowning at the railway project initiated by the SAC on its own.²³⁰

Conclusion

The IJA's peculiar characteristics considerably influenced how the POWs were treated on the railway. From the beginning, the IJA's principle was a compromise between the Japanese traditional values and Western advanced knowledge and technology. Indeed, Bushido, an essential Japanese value in the IJA, did not fully accord with Western humanitarianism and international law. However, Bushido was not a cause of the IJA's brutality. Many Western scholars have seen the Japanese sense of shame based on Bushido as causing Japanese soldiers' contempt, indifference and brutality towards the POWs. However, the history of the IJA shows that the Japanese treated POWs with consideration until WWI since Bushido encouraged compassion for surrendering enemies.

During WWII, contrary to the prevailing image, the Japanese Government and the military authorities had at least an intention to conform with international law. Although having not ratified the Geneva Convention, Japan decided to comply with it as long as it did not conflict with Japan's interests. Nevertheless, vagueness remained in such a POW policy. In other words, the IJA did not have a clear-cut standard about how to treat POWs. The vagueness confused the Japanese servicemen, in particular, on the railway. Along with Bushido, the vagueness of the Japanese could not be fully understood by Westerners.

Besides, sectionalism in the Japanese military organisation was inexplicable for Westerners who had rationality based on modern military theories and technology. The Japanese military's sectionalism was so deep that it often caused inefficiency in planning and implementing operations. Accordingly, IHQ's decisions were often delayed, which resulted in the IHQ's indecision on the railway construction.

²³⁰ Yoshihiko Futamatsu(ed.), *Tai-Men Tetsudo Kensetsu-Ki (Narrative of the Thai-Burma Railway Construction)* (Hanazono Shobo, 1955), pp.114-5.

Consequently, the indecisiveness affected the timing of the construction and thus the conditions of POWs' labour.

Furthermore, the IJA's sectionalism, making the organisation complicated, caused the opaqueness in the decision-making process. Besides the rivalries between the IJA and the IJN and between the GSO and the MOW, the SAC's involvement made the decision-making process more opaque. In this chapter, it was ascertained that the SAC took the initiative in planning the railway construction and the employment of POWs and persuaded the GSO, which was at first reluctant to approve the plan. In the decision-making process, the Railway Corps was alienated to no small extent while working hard to prepare the construction. Moreover, as the MOW had no authority to intervene in the operational decision, its role was to amend or issue laws and regulations regarding the POWs' treatment and send the POW Camp Administration staff. Nevertheless, the POW Camp Administration came under the command of SAC. Notably, although the Railway Corps' engineers were also under the SAC's control, the engineers' 'operation' position was more potent than the camp staff's 'administration' one.

Thus, the IJA's intention and behaviour cannot be comprehended without understanding these peculiar characteristics. The next chapter will deal with how the railway engineers treated the POWs who had different values and how the POWs regarded the Japanese as brutal without knowing the IJA's peculiarity.

Chapter 2: Tarumoto and Officer POWs

Introduction

2/Lieut. Juji Tarumoto was a platoon commandant, the 9th Railway Regiment, the IJA. Among British POWs, Tarumoto was notorious as a 'brutal commandant' and was prosecuted as a war criminal after the war. While forty-five affidavits and statements were submitted to the court by ex-POWs, Tarumoto escaped the death penalty with his 'brutality' corrected by the court in the end. Nevertheless, his brutal image survived among the POWs, who eventually shaped the history of the railway. After the trial, Tarumoto began to write his memoirs, stating in detail his experience and account, which gave quite a different picture from what the POWs drew. This chapter will explore how Tarumoto's brutal image was shaped and examine the accounts of both sides.

Notably, Tarumoto was deeply involved in the formation of the 'officers working party' (OWP²³¹) in the No.2 POW Camp. In short, Tarumoto is said to have forced the British officer POWs in No.2 camp to work on the railway. However, through thorough examinations of British and Japanese sources, a perception gap has been found between the two sides regarding the OWP incident: the officer POWs argue that they were forced to work against their will, but Tarumoto insists that their consent was obtained. Thus, this is a case in point to examine how the perception gap between the two was created. Here, cultural differences between the British and the Japanese, causing misunderstandings on both sides, are the key to understanding contrarities between ex-POWs' recollections and Tarumoto's memoirs. The correction of the misunderstandings will elucidate how Tarumoto became a 'brutal commandant'.

Tarumoto's brutal image after 50 years

On 17 December 2002, *The Times* published an obituary article entitled 'Douglas Weir: Colonial police officer who defied the Japanese as a prisoner of war',

²³¹ In this thesis, 'officers working party' is abbreviated to OWP. The term has a special meaning in the context that officers cannot be forced to work.

reporting that Douglas Weir passed away on 27 November 2002, aged 85. Weir was a former officer POW who was forced to work on the railway, and in 1995, fifty years after the war, travelled to Japan and confronted Tarumoto, who had allegedly threatened the British officer POWs with the firing squad to work on the railway.²³² The British press reported this old enemies' confrontation. *The Spectator* dramatically featured Tarumoto's brutality based on the evidence of his war crimes trial, which sentenced him to life imprisonment.

Jugi Tarumoto was a unit commander on the Kwai. The official assessor of his case described him as one of Japan's worst war criminals, and affidavits from more than 40 men bore this out at his trial.²³³

The 'official assessor' referred to was Brigadier Davies, the advisory officer to Major General Cox, the confirming officer of the war crimes trials. In his report to Cox, Davies overtly expressed his dissatisfaction with the sentence as Tarumoto escaped the death penalty. Davies commented that:

The evidence against the accused although entirely documentary was for the most part more than sufficient both to identify the accused and to establish that he is one of the worst types of Japanese tried up to the present. There is no doubt that this accused brutally ill-treated the prisoners of war working on the Burma-Siam Railway throughout the whole of his employment as an engineer supervising the construction of the Railway. It is difficult to understand why the court allowed him to escape the death penalty.²³⁴

At the meeting with Tarumoto, Weir pressed for affidavits detailing Tarumoto's ill-treatment into his hand. After reading them and a long pause, Tarumoto said that he could not remember, but that "if what everyone says about what I did was

²³² 'Douglas Weir: Colonial Police Officer Who Defied the Japanese as a Prisoner of War', *The Times* (London, December 2002), p.27.

²³³ 'This Is Your Torture', *The Spectator* (London, 29 July 1995), p.13.

²³⁴ TNA PRO WO235/857, Brigadier Davis' report 'War Crimes Courts'.

true, then I accept there can never be sufficient apology for the misery and suffering we caused all of you.”²³⁵ The detail of the meeting of Weir and Tarumoto was reported by *The Spectator* as follows:

Weir told him, “I saw the ill-treatment you ordered. And the details of the bullying are contained in the forty-five affidavits from soldiers all over Britain.” He then handed him extracts from the trial affidavits, translated into Japanese for Tarumoto's convenience. Tarumoto read through them. “I have no remembrance.” he said. He now began to deny he'd forced the men to work. “I made efforts to get co-operation from POWs by persuasion.” But Weir muttered, “Never, never!”²³⁶

This conversation indicates a clear perception gap between the British and the Japanese. Weir talked on the premise that all the affidavits told the truth, whereas Tarumoto knew the inconsistencies of the POWs' affidavits and statements that he had already read himself after his trial.²³⁷ Notably, the court pointed out the inconsistencies and thus could not sentence Tarumoto to death.

On 15 June 1946, Tarumoto was sentenced to life imprisonment by President Lt. Col. G.C.H. Culley of the Court in Singapore. In the findings, Culley corrected Tarumoto's charge by excluding the words ‘Australian and Dutch’, ‘deaths of some and’, and ‘of others’ from the original charge as follows:

Committing a war crime in that he in SIAM between the 1 August 42 and 31 December 43 when member of the 9th Engineer Regiment engaged in the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway in violation of the laws and usages of war was concerned in the inhumane treatment of British, Australian and

²³⁵ Matthew Bond, ‘Reconciling the Facts and Our Expectations’, *The Times* (London, 28 July 1995), p.39; Also see John Young, ‘Kwai Camp Chief Apologises to British PoWs’, *The Times* (London, 27 July 1995), p.9; The meeting was set by ITV's programme “Big Story: Tokyo Encounter”.

²³⁶ *The Spectator*, op. cit.

²³⁷ Tarumoto, pp.135-136; pp.388-390.

Dutch Prisoners of war employed in the construction of the said railway resulting in the deaths of some and physical suffering of others of the said Prisoners of War.²³⁸

The prosecutor's evidence, which was entirely documentary consisting of 28 affidavits and 17 unsworn statements produced by ex-POWs, could not prove that Tarumoto's ill-treatment caused the deaths of some POWs.

However, Tarumoto's brutal image remained unchanged. Here, the press played a crucial role in consolidating Tarumoto's 'brutality'. On 16 June 1946, Singapore's *The Sunday Tribune* reported Tarumoto's life imprisonment in the article "Life Term for Nip Law Student", concluding that "This maltreatment resulted in the deaths of Privates Miller, Booth Ogden, Rutherford and Coleby, Signalman Wainwright and A.W. Lord."²³⁹ Surprisingly, this article omitted the correction of Tarumoto's charge. Neither did *The Straits Times* report that the finding excluded the 'deaths' from the original charge. The press only reported the sensational stories based on POWs' affidavits and statements that asserted some POWs' deaths.²⁴⁰ Five decades after the trial, the press continued stressing Tarumoto's brutal image shaped by the ex-POWs' narratives, supported by Davies' dissatisfaction with the sentence.

The officer POW working party

Why did the POWs regard Tarumoto as the most brutal engineer commandant in the first place? It might be a clue that, in his trial, 17 out of 45 affidavits and statements were submitted by officers. The proportionality of officers in the camp taken into account, the figure indicates the officers' strong influence in the trial. Indeed, Tarumoto incurred officers' enmity for the OWP Incident at Chungkai.

In January 1943, the No.2 POW Camp formed the OWP as the supplementary

²³⁸ TNA PRO WO235/857. Davis report.

²³⁹ 'Life Term for Nip Law Student', *The Sunday Tribune* (Singapore, 16 June 1946), p.3.

²⁴⁰ 'British Officers Beaten For 45 Mins.', *The Straits Times* (Singapore, 12 June 1946), p.5.

workforce for the railway construction at Chungkai. Notably, the British officers claim that they were forced to work under duress, whereas the Japanese insist on the officers' consent. Nevertheless, regarding who was to blame, some officers alleged that Tarumoto was, but others blamed Commander Yanagida of the No.2 Camp for threatening to stop some food such as fruits and eggs from local vendors if the officers did not agree to work. Lieutenant James Bell's affidavit states as follows:

In January, 1943, I was in Chungkai Camp when the Japanese Engineer officer called 2/Lieutenant Tarimoto ordered all British officers who were not needed to take charge of working parties to work on the construction of the Thailand-Burma Railway. We all refused to work when Tarimoto had us all on parade. He then told us he would use the most extreme measures to make us work. He then turned the guard out with fixed bayonets. The guards loaded their rifles. This direct threat had the desired result.²⁴¹

Lieutenant Raymond's affidavit showed the same account as Bell's.

When we arrived at Chungkai camp, we were told that officers were to be put to work, and we protested as it was against the rules. The Camp Commander YANAGITA was away at the time, and Lieutenant TARUMOTO was in charge. TARUMOTO paraded all the Officers and told us we were to work on the railway, and we refused. With that, he got the firing squad out, with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets held at the ready position, and when our senior Officer saw this, he told us he thought we had protested sufficiently and that he would make a note that we were doing this under duress.²⁴²

Lieutenant Roland Hall's affidavit states a different account, claiming that Yanagida was responsible for the incident, as follows:

²⁴¹ TNA PRO WO235/857. Lieut. James Bell's Affidavit.

²⁴² TNA PRO WO235/857. Lieut. Christopher John Raymond's Affidavit.

This camp (No. 2 POW Group, Siam) was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel YANAGIDA. Officers were compelled to work on the railway by the Japanese commandant, again under very severe duress. Some food including fruit and eggs, was available from native supply, for the sick men in the camp, and this Lt. Col. YANAGIDA threatened to stop if the officers did not go out to work.²⁴³

Apparently, there existed two different narratives about the incident among the British officers, but Tarumoto's memoirs can explain the difference.

According to Tarumoto, by December 1942 at Chungkai, the number of sick POWs gradually increased, and hence the labour force began to decrease. Thus, Tarumoto requested Yanagida, the Commander of the No.2 Camp, to send more POWs to the construction site. On an unknown date between mid-November and late December 1942, Tarumoto, accompanying his superior Captain Yoshida, visited the No.2 Camp Headquarters. Then, Yoshida asked Yanagida how the Camp distributed the POWs to the construction site. In Yanagida's answer, Tarumoto found that the number of POWs working inside the camp was larger than expected and that many officer POWs were not working in the camp. Thus, Yoshida asked Yanagida to reduce the camp workers and send more workers to the construction site. However, Yanagida insisted that such camp workers were needed for the maintenance of the camp. When Yoshida pointed out that POW kitchen had a plethora of staff compared to that of the Japanese, Yanagida answered that they had to collect firewood. Resultingly, no agreement was made in this meeting, but Yanagida added, as usual, that he would think about revising the POWs distribution.²⁴⁴

In his memoirs, Tarumoto recalls that Yanagida was concerned about dealing with officer POWs who were privileged and protected by international law. In fact, the Japanese engineers and camp staff wondered why over 400 officers, who could not be used as a workforce, had been sent there. The Japanese clearly recognised that officers must not be forced to work. Thus, as the officer POWs were sent

²⁴³ TNA PRO WO235/857. Lieut. Roland Hall's Affidavit.

²⁴⁴ Tarumoto, pp.73-74.

repeatedly from Singapore, Yanagida, with resentment, asked his senior officer to stop sending them to the railway camps in Thailand, but in vain.²⁴⁵ Tarumoto describes how the Japanese felt about the officer POWs who did not have to work: their presence in the camps was nothing but a contradiction to the construction as the transportation by ship on the River Kwai was never easy, and the rations for the officer POWs were now required, moreover, the same amount of allowance as the IJA officers had to be paid to them.²⁴⁶

In January 1943, the Nakamura Company, which Tarumoto's platoon belonged to, started preparing for a bridge-building at Chungkai. Although machinery and materials were ready, the workforce was always short. Thus, in early January, Tarumoto again asked Yanagida to send more POWs if possible. Yanagida answered that he would ask the POW Command at the regular meeting on Friday whether they could agree to send officer POWs. In the No.2 POW Camp, the Japanese and the POW representatives held regular meetings on Friday, negotiating various matters for both sides' interest.²⁴⁷ Until this moment, Tarumoto was almost giving up employing officers for the construction, but now he had a little hope. In retrospect, Tarumoto guessed that Yanagida bore the matter in mind since Tarumoto once urged him to allow the railway platoon to use the British officers on the ground that officer POWs belonging to the No.1 Camp at Tamarkan were already working for the 3rd Battalion in the construction of a wooden bridge on the River Kwai.²⁴⁸ The POW commander at the bridge camp was Toosey, who adopted the 'limited cooperation' strategy.

On behalf of the Nakamura Company, Tarumoto attended the next Friday meeting with 2/Lieutenant Kiriya, the commandant of the 2nd platoon of the Company. From the No.2 Camp Administration, Yanagida and all the relevant personnel were present. Representing the POW Command, Lt. Colonel Williamson, the POW camp commander, and eight other Lt. Colonels being POW company commandants were present with their adjutants and medical officers. In

²⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.75-76.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.76.

²⁴⁷ Hiroike, p.163.

²⁴⁸ Tarumoto, p.79.

this session, firstly, the POWs made some requests regarding the camp's accommodation, rations, and hygiene, to which the Japanese staff answered and explained the current situation. In a usual regular meeting, the railway work would rarely be discussed, but, Tarumoto recollects that Yanagida was determined to make a deal with the POWs on that day. Yanagida permitted POWs to buy and read *The Bangkok Times*, pleasing them. Then, Yanagida broached the officers' labour subject along the lines of officers' health problem, suggesting that officers should work for their health, preferably on the railway, as many of them were doing nothing in the camp. The senior British officers grinned weirdly and started to talk with each other in a subdued voice. While they were talking, Yanagida politely pressed them for a favourable answer. When Williamson gave an evasive answer, Yanagida emphatically said that he could order them to work if they did not want to voluntarily.

After discussing the matter for a while, Williamson asked what kind of work officers would be assigned with. Tarumoto answered, 'building a bridge'. Then, Williamson requested that the officers should work separately from the men. Tarumoto replied that the work would meet the condition. Williamson then asked who would command the OWP, and Tarumoto answered he would. Williamson requested that the commandant should be a Japanese officer to avoid misunderstandings and troubles. Tarumoto answered that he would supervise the party as long as possible, and Williamson nodded silently. Then, Yanagida asked Williamson whether they would consent to the work. Williamson answered that 'company officers only'. Yanagida concluded the meeting with his appreciation.

However, the trouble took place the following day, 7 January 1943, when Tarumoto went to the No.2 Camp accompanied by his men to receive the OWP. Usually, such a job was done by a lance corporal, but this time he did it himself because he had promised to supervise the party. After the morning roll call, other-rank POWs went to work, and officers were gathered in front of the clerk room of the camp. On that day, as Yanagida was out, his adjutant was in charge. There was no staff except several guards in the camp. The officer POWs were already clamorous and became noisier, protesting after Williamson said something.

In his memoirs, Tarumoto states that the first thing he thought was that his

colleagues and men were waiting for the OWP. Then, his resentment came from the officers' ignorance of the agreement made the previous day and the attitude of Yanagida's adjutant, who was supposed to persuade the POW officers, but only going back and forth between Tarumoto and Williamson while the protest escalated. At last, Tarumoto ordered his men to put bayonets on their rifles and make a line in front of the officer POWs.

By forming the firing squad, Tarumoto intended to show his strong will to the British officers. To his surprise, they immediately became silent. The adjutant came and said that the officers were saying that they had no choice but to work under duress and asked what Tarumoto would do. Tarumoto brought the officers to the construction site. At that time, Tarumoto felt stupid as his conduct gave a good excuse to Williamson and other officers, and content with gaining the new workforce.²⁴⁹

As above, Tarumoto's account explains the whole process of the OWP's formation at Chungkai, including how Tarumoto threatened the British officers with the firing squad and how Yanagida compelled the officers to work on the railway. On the other hand, the narratives in the POWs' affidavits seem to be based on fragmentary information and cause some apparent contradictions.

The incident in POWs' memoirs

The reliance exclusively on the POWs' court evidence makes it difficult to grasp the whole picture of the incident; meanwhile, the POWs' memoirs, written relatively freely, can be a crucial source of information.

Captain Richard Bishop stayed at Chungkai Camp in January 1943. In his memoirs, Bishop described the incident in detail. Knowing that idleness was anathema to the Japanese, Bishop anticipated that so many officers in the camp would be put to work on the railway sooner or later. Indeed, before long, the Japanese gave a peremptory order for all officers to parade for work. On the following morning, the British POW Command passed on the order as it received, which caused a blast of protest from the officers. Nevertheless, all the officers turned up for the parade the next morning, knowing that the Japanese were fully

²⁴⁹ Tarumoto, pp.93-98.

entitled to call a parade. Then, the Japanese commandant appeared and talked to the senior British officer. They exchanged bows and salutes with great formality amid the silence and started an inaudible conversation, in which the British commander seemed to be refusing the demand from the Japanese. Then, the Japanese commandant made the interpreter shout that 'All officers must work'. After a silence, he continued, 'No work, give no food', followed by another silence. Then, the commandant signalled with an elaborate gesture to an NCO hovering in the background. Bishop described the next scene as follows:

This was the cue for a party of armed men, who had been waiting behind the guard hut, to come forward. With fixed bayonets, they formed up in front of the prisoners, and at an order from the NCO, loaded their magazines. [...] With a gesture of impatience, the commandant spoke again. "[...], officers not work; all sick men work." This was unexpected. Before the guards had reached the hospital hut, the Japanese had won. In honour of their victory, they allowed concessions. Field officers were allowed exemption, and the first day was declared a holiday.²⁵⁰

Bishop's view discords with some parts of Tarumoto's: Bishop argue that the Japanese threatened to cut the food supply and force sick POWs to work; the first day became a day off. However, common ground can be found between the two: for instance, the firing squad was formed in front of the officer POWs; field officers were exempted from the work; more importantly, on the previous day of the incident, the POW Command passed on the order from the Japanese. Thus, Bishop's narrative supports Tarumoto's explanation that the POW Command and the Japanese had an agreement at the meeting the previous day. Nevertheless, it seems that Bishop did not know the agreement.

In fact, Weir's narrative reported by the press tells about how the British officers were forced to work. *The Times* on 17 December 2002 reported that Weir

²⁵⁰ Richard William Noel Bishop, 'Before the High King's Horses' (IWM, Unpublished), in Private papers of Captain R.W.N. Bishop, Documents.3155., pp.73-4.

and 17 other junior officers signed and submitted a protest to the British POW Command in November 1942, demanding that the appeasement policy adopted by their command should cease. The point was that the POW Command's policy to the matter of officers' manual labour should be determined according to the British Government's policy based on the conventions. In short, Weir and other junior officers insisted that all the infringements demanded by the Japanese should be resisted as a point of principle.²⁵¹ The article continues as follows:

They succeeded in forcing the British POW command to protest to the senior Japanese officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Yanagida, who withdrew from the camp for a few days while his subordinates paraded the British officers, threatened them with machine guns and compelled them to agree. But this co-operation was so manifestly obtained under duress that it absolved them of any charges of complicity and possible repercussions after the war.²⁵²

The article reveals that the Japanese repeatedly requested the British officers' work as early as November 1942 and that the POW Command and the Japanese negotiated the matter. However, the POWs' affidavits submitted to Tarumoto's trial did not mention this episode of the junior officers' protest, still less the agreement made at the Friday meeting.

Notably, Williamson did not submit an affidavit to the court. As a result, the negotiation and the agreement regarding the OWP were omitted from the existing account. Williamson should be a star witness to examine the reliability of Tarumoto's account as the POW commander who negotiated with the Japanese. In fact, in a report on the No.2 POW camp conditions, Major H.T. Crane, the predecessor of Williamson, stated that "Further reports on this camp at later dates can be supplied by Lt. Col. Williamson, RA. Senior British Officer, No.2 Group which arrived later."²⁵³ Also, in Lieut. Hall's report, the name of Williamson was mentioned as a witness to the OWP incident. It is intriguing that in his report,

²⁵¹ *The Times*, 'Douglas Weir'.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ TNA PRO WO325/157. Major H.T. Crane's report.

Hall did not mention Tarumoto's name and stated that the officers were compelled to work under threat of hospital closure and allowance suspension for officers.²⁵⁴ These reports imply Williamson's importance in ascertaining what happened on that day, and the British military authorities knew it.

One might wonder whether Williamson could survive the war. A record regarding the award recommendation for Williamson is preserved in the National Archives. Temporary Lt. Colonel John Rowley Williamson of 2st Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Indian Artillery, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order by the King on 1 August 1946.²⁵⁵ Moreover, the Imperial War Museum shows on its website Williamson's history as the Commander of the No.2 POW Camp:

[H]e was one of five senior officers assigned to 'command' troops selected fit to begin work on the Thai-Burma railway in June, 1942; 3000 British prisoners of war, known as the "June Mainland Party" departed Singapore station in groups of 600, leaving on 18th, 20th, 22nd, 24th, and 26th, heading for Ban Pong, Thailand, a distance of 1200 miles. Williamson was the senior officer in the transport of the 26th, known as Group 2. [...] Williamson's moves whilst in Japanese hands were as follows: June – October 1942 Ban Pong (00km) October 1942 – May 1943 Chungkai (57km) CO Group 2. [...] ²⁵⁶

Williamson was certainly at Chungkai as the Commander when the OWP incident occurred in January 1943. Thus, it seems strange that Williamson made no statement or affidavit for Tarumoto's trial despite his excellent knowledge about what had happened in that camp. What does this omission mean? The negotiation and agreement might have been an inconvenient fact for the British officers and the war crimes investigators as the senior officers' behaviours looked like appeasement. Indeed, as Weir's narrative indicates, the junior officers were critical

²⁵⁴ TNA PRO WO325/157. Lieut. R. Hall's report.

²⁵⁵ TNA PRO WO373/47/251. Recommendation for Award for Williamson, John Rowley.

²⁵⁶ IWM's website: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30083819>

of the senior officers' appeasement policy towards the Japanese. Presumably, the court evidence had to avoid the fact that the senior British officers and the Japanese made an agreement at the Friday meeting.

The friction between the senior officers and the junior officers can also be found in another junior officer's writing. In his memoirs, Lieut. Coast described the OWP Incident at Chungkai from a young officer's perspective. His narrative indicates that the junior officers were disobedient to the Japanese and their senior officers even before the incident. Coast recollects that on an unknown date in November or December 1942, the Japanese quite coldly and clearly said that 'The officers must work', meaning that the officers were 'another gang of coolies', not daily work in the camp.²⁵⁷ Then, the officers sent a solid and indignant protest to Yanagida. Coast's recollection corresponds to Weir's. At this point, the Japanese did not force them to work on the railway as Coast states that:

Later we suggested that we should work only for the good of the camp, and extended the already existing Officers' Parties who were carrying water, building the hospital and digging malarial drains in the surrounding marshy country. This worked for a week or so, and every day most of us were up to our knees in mud, drain-digging.²⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the officers' rage erupted when a Japanese private was put in charge of their party. Coast explains that what the officers objected to more than anything else was working under the Japanese supervision, describing their attitude towards the Japanese as follows:

Some people downed tools, others completely ignored the Nip and worked when he said rest, and rested when he said work. By the end of the morning everyone was in a rage, and a strongly-worded complaint went in to Colonel Featherstonhaugh, our Group Commander.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Coast, p.76.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.,

²⁵⁹ Ibid.,

Williamson was called Featherstonhaugh in Coast's memoirs, in which the senior British officers were acrimoniously criticised.

It must be remembered that as the war went on on all fronts, so it had been necessary to weed out here and to prune the dead wood there, till ultimately a younger and more modern Army was possible. Amongst our seniors no such pruning had been possible, and we were still cluttered up by many pre-1914-minded old gentlemen who had complete power over us. Of course, there were COs who were all right, and some were excellent. But some few, too, were positively vicious. General analysis often showed that though they sometimes had charm, honourableness and simplicity to their credit side, their qualities were unfortunately quite useless in dealing with Nips; and on the debit side they had that narrow, regular outlook bounded by the Prep. School, the Public School and, above all, by pre-war Sandhurst, and were quite invincibly stupid; sometimes because they just could not cope with the Nip dishonesty of mind, they behaved in a way that looked as if they were afraid. Now no one disliked these charming, empty-headed old boys as men; but as our leaders against the Nips, they were terrible. Some of them must have known their incompetency and they should have resigned in favour of younger people; this I never knew one of them to do.²⁶⁰

As an example of the generational conflict, Coast described an episode: on an unknown date, Major Wood, twenty-three years old at that time, was ordered to work under the Japanese by the POW Command, but he refused. As a result, Wood was court-martialled and reprimanded by the POW authorities. Coast comments that the younger generation greatly appreciated his balancing influence to the good.²⁶¹

Tarumoto's incident occurred while the younger officers were waging a strong protest against the order. Here, the generational conflict seems to have impeded

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.77.

²⁶¹ Ibid., Major Wood was called Major Wooley in the book.

communication between Williamson and the junior officers. Coast described the incident from a junior officer's viewpoint and seemed not to have known the agreement made between the POW Command and the Japanese. Therefore, the junior officers thought that Tarumoto had unilaterally issued the order. Coast states in his memoirs that:

Taramoto then gave orders that every officer would parade next morning for railway work. Protests were not even listened to, and if we didn't parade armed guards were detailed to drag us out of the huts. There would be no compromise; you could take your choice – obey or be shot. We paraded.²⁶²

Coast's recollection confirms that the junior officers were ordered to parade the next day for the railway work on the previous day of the incident. Nevertheless, it is unclear how Williamson issued the order: whether he issued it under his authority or just conveyed the Japanese order. Furthermore, it is unclear whether Williamson mentioned that the order was based on the Friday meeting agreement.

At any rate, the junior officers agreed to parade the next day but not to work for the railway. Thus, Williamson was caught in the middle, failing to convince the officers to work on the railway. Thus, during the officers' parade, Coast saw Williamson trying pathetically to reason with Tarumoto.²⁶³

Then, Coast described the moment when Tarumoto ordered the firing squad, as follows:

Councils among the junior officers were held, and the general opinion was to hang on a bit and see what happened. Then Taramoto posted armed guards on two sides of us. Finally, to a tense, white-faced section, he gave the order to load – and that was the end.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ibid., P.78.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

The existence of the junior officers' councils implies that they had some influence on the camp matters, in which the senior officers could not have a heavy hand. Coast continues that:

The Colonels' advice was to give in. They were probably right, and certainly the Nips played the same game with the same result up and down the line.²⁶⁵

Notably, it was not the senior officer's order but his advice that was given to the junior officers, who eventually agreed to work on the railway under extreme compulsion. This is the junior officers' common perspective of the incident, perceived differently from Tarumoto's and senior British officers'.

However, Noszlopy relates Coast's view with that of Colonel Knights, who thought that officers should work to share their men's burden. Noszlopy states that:

John [Coast] responds that 'we were convinced that had we not started work then those machine guns would fire on us.' This view is corroborated in the documentary by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Ernest Knights ('Colonel Day') who states that officers agreed to work alongside the Other Ranks as they 'should share in their troubles ... [though] by doing so we had been guilty of aiding the enemy.'²⁶⁶

Although Noszlopy apparently sees the two referring to a single incident, the Colonel's comment should not be treated in the same way as the Lieutenant's. In fact, the former was made in a separate incident in a different camp; moreover, the motive to accept officers' labour was totally different. Coast belonged to the No.2 Camp, where Tarumoto and Yanagida formed the OWP, whereas Knights was the No.4 Camp Commander and agreed to officers' working when the Japanese requested. Thus, Knights' words, "we had been guilty of aiding the enemy", imply that in his camp the officers were not threatened. Knights' decision

²⁶⁵ Ibid., pp78-9.

²⁶⁶ Noszlopy, 'Introduction' in Coast, p.xxxii.

was led by his determination to protect the men under his command, despite his dilemma as a British commission officer.

In his memoirs, Knights revealed how and why he made such a decision. Surprisingly, the decision was based on mutual trust between Knights and Lieutenant Tanaka, the Japanese camp adjutant. Knights described Tanaka as follows: "Whilst Tanaka could be an absolute swine, he did have his rational moments, when he was quite human and understanding."²⁶⁷

When the number of sick POWs increased between mid-November and late December 1942, Knights caught and talked to Tanaka on the subject of the railway work, particularly on sick men's employment, pointing out the futility of the procedure. Tanaka, with human feelings, agreed with Knights in principle but could not do anything in practice as he thought that "now it was war, and in war the only considerations were to conquer or die."²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the high incidence of sickness caused the slowing down of the construction work, which began to concern Tanaka's superiors and made them consider the workforce's augmentation, in which the officers were still not to be included. Nevertheless, Tanaka, seeing Knights so concerned about the sick men, suggested that many fit officers loafing about the camp should also be concerned to the degree of "sacrificing their personal pride and prejudices for the welfare of the men they commanded."²⁶⁹ In his memoirs, Knights admits that he could not refute this argument in principle.

Besides, Tanaka pointed out another benefit of officers' working on the railway: the camp's food situation could be stabilised and even more improved because the ration's amount delivered to the camp was based on the numbers of those working on the railway.²⁷⁰ Knights saw an element of truth in Tanaka's words. Generally, the Japanese policy was to provide the fit men with the full-scale ration and the sick with half the ration, but the ration was equally distributed to

²⁶⁷ Alfred E. Knights, *Singapore and the Thailand-Burma Railway*, ed. by Reginald Harland (Bury St. Edmunds: Arena, 2013), p.103.

²⁶⁸ Ibid..

²⁶⁹ Ibid..

²⁷⁰ Ibid..

everyone in the camp. Knights recognized that the overall standard could improve by increasing the ratio of those who worked. Tanaka ended the conversation, leaving the matter in Knights' hands.²⁷¹

Having visited the camp hospital and seen the situation worsening, Knights, at last, decided to form the OWP to save the sick men. Knights recollects this moment as follows:

Already, my daily visits to the hospital were becoming something of a nightmare, the suffering was indescribable, the atmosphere of frustration amongst the medical officers at the inability adequately to attend to the need of their charges through lack of medical supplies, and their feeling that they were fighting a losing battle in spite of all their superhuman efforts, was pathetic; and whilst, at this stage, there was nothing I could do to help them directly, there was no doubt in my mind about doing everything in my power to prevent a worsening of the situation. It had to be a No.1 priority.²⁷²

However, Knights faced the problem of the officers' railway work constituting a breach of their allegiance to the Service as it would undoubtedly amount to assisting the enemy and be entirely contrary for tradition. Notably, Knights was flexible enough to think that "loyalty and tradition would have to be weighed against what adherence to these ideals would achieve, and what the overall effect would be as a result."²⁷³

Nevertheless, Knights knew that some officers, especially the senior regulars, would follow the Service tradition. Therefore, Knights discussed the matter with the most senior officer in the camp, Lt. Col. "Tommy" Thomas of the Beds & Herts Regt. Thomas agreed to Knights' appreciation and conclusion but also saw the difficulty in obtaining some officers' consent. Thus, the two agreed that if and when it came to the pinch, Knights should make further representations to the

²⁷¹ Ibid., p.103-4.

²⁷² Ibid., p.104.

²⁷³ Ibid.

Japanese on the principle of utilising officers on the work.²⁷⁴

Later, Knights had a talk with Tanaka on general topics about the camp. Referring to Knights' previous request that he should be allowed to deal with camp administrative arrangements, Tanaka suggested that a bargain could be made if Knights could organise an OWP, and assured that if not, the Japanese would go in their way. Tanaka wanted a reply the next morning. Thus, Knights and the officers had a meeting, in which he emphasised the humane aspects of the officers' work on the railway, and Thomas followed him with the view to the predominance of humane consideration. However, senior officers, particularly from the Indian Army, showed their strong objection, arguing that there was no guarantee that the Japanese would ameliorate the men's conditions. Here, Thomas and Knights insisted that the Japanese word should at least be tested. Moreover, Knights obtained through talks a positive impression of Tanaka having a degree of sincerity despite his cruel and sadistic nature in general. The meeting concluded that for saving the sick men in hospital, the officers would willingly take their share of the burden under the condition that the order would have to be from the senior British officer, not the Japanese. This condition made a compromise possible as particular officers would, in any case, refuse the Japanese order to work on the railway. Therefore, Thomas issued the order and stated that he and Knights would accept full responsibility for any subsequent criticism of their action. Thus, all officers accepted the order.²⁷⁵

The next morning, Knights reported the meeting's decision to Tanaka and made it clear that the senior British officer issued the order with the expectation that Tanaka would adhere to his promise: only fit men would be sent out to work, and sick men would not be turned out of the hospital.²⁷⁶ The Japanese kept his word as expected. Knights states in his memoirs that:

From visits I subsequently made to the detached officers working party camp I concluded that Tanaka was adhering to the spirit of his agreement.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p.105.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, pp.107-8.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p.108.

Furthermore, I cannot recall a single instance of sick men being driven out of hospital and being forced to work.²⁷⁷

Notably, the agreement brought some positive effects on both sides. Tanaka could avoid employing specific methods to enforce the order and thus was given a free hand to ensure that the OWP should be separated from other ranks and not be given excessive tasks, and most importantly, sick men should not be called to work.²⁷⁸

This episode of the No.4 Camp offers a striking contrast to the officer POWs' narratives at the No.2 Camp. Knights' account explains the commander's dilemma between loyalty to the country and human consideration to save their men. Williamson must have been caught in the same dilemma as Knights but could not persuade the junior officers. Implementing the agreement could have led to a different result.

Officers' labour at Tamarkan

Besides the No.4 Camp, the Tamarkan Camp was a successful case of strong leadership. Toosey was the Camp Commander at Tamarkan, where a wooden bridge was built on the River Kwai. Thus, this camp was modelled by the famous film. Belonging to the No.1 Camp, Tamarkan was located in the vicinity of the No.2 Camp's Chungkai. Thus, Tarumoto could obtain the information that the engineers at Tamarkan had already employed officer POWs to build the bridge, while the officers at Chungkai were still enjoying their privileged status. Notably, at Tamarkan, the officer-men relation was unique since Toosey ensured equal sacrifice. For instance, to promote unity among the POWs, Toosey forbade the officers' mess and arranged the officers' sleeping in the same huts with the men.²⁷⁹ Thus, Davies, the author of Toosey's biography, points out that:

This not only aided communication and understanding but also

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Davies, p.108.

demonstrated that the officers were indeed sharing the hardships being endured by the other ranks.²⁸⁰

Thus, Toosey insisted that officers should go out with the men's working party not to work on the railway but to intervene in case of trouble. This supervisory role of officers could be seen at other camps, but at Tamarkan, as Davies points out, the officers' supervision system resulted in unfortunate consequences.²⁸¹

Although, in the beginning, satisfied with the officers' supervision, the Japanese gradually demanded the labour of the officers. Before long, Lieut. Kosakata, the Japanese camp commandant, ordered Lieut. Bridge to work with the men. However, Bridge refused to do so and ended up confinement in the guard room. When Toosey protested to the Japanese, he was told that all officers must work in the same way as the men. Thus, Toosey called a meeting to consult with the officers and provided his view that the officers had no choice but to work as instructed. At the same time, Toosey expressed confidence that he could persuade the Japanese to allow the officers to work only with their unit: the officers did not form an OWP because they should continue to act as a buffer between their men and the Japanese engineers. Indeed, while undertaking physical labour, the officers were able to protect their men. Notably, Toosey did not issue an order but leave the decision to the officers with his words that "If you refuse, I will stand and get shot with you." The meeting ended with a unanimous decision to work with their men. Having heard the decision, the Japanese agreed to release Bridge.²⁸²

The next day, the officers went out with their men fully prepared for the labour, and indeed some of them engaged in manual tasks. Then, a strange thing happened. Having satisfied himself, Kosakata lost his interest in the officers' labour and even kept the officers from working at a later stage. Thus, the officers gradually returned to a purely supervisory role.²⁸³ After all, Toosey's policy that the officers should work with the men ended up saving both the officers and the

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., p.109.

²⁸³ Ibid.

men.

Both Knights and Toosey successfully dealt with the problem of officers' labour on the railway in the principle that officers should share the burden and sacrifice themselves for the sick and their men. The strong and flexible leadership of the two commanders contrasts quite sharply with the leadership at Chungkai, where the junior officers' obstinacy to the matter seems to have deprived the leadership of flexibility and made things worse.

Cultural gap

The Chungkai OWP Incident revealed the cultural difference between the British and the Japanese. The two had quite a different view on superiors' order, officer-men relation, and POW's status. In principle, the officer POWs, whose rights were protected by international conventions, had no obligation to work during the captivity, although the captor could impose labour to other ranks for non-operational purposes. Nevertheless, the cultural difference showed up when a superior officer issued an order against the principle or law.

In the IJA, a superior's order was absolute and must be executed no matter what. On the other hand, the British servicemen had only to obey legal orders and thus could refuse illegal orders. In the OWP Incident at Chungkai, the British officers knew that it was illegal for the Japanese to force them to work on the railway and thought they had the right to refuse the order even if their commander issued it by agreement. In contrast, the Japanese regarded the commanders' agreement as binding and took it for granted that the British officers should obey their commander's order. Neither side understood the cultural gap between them, and both sides felt resentment against each other.

Regarding how POWs should behave, the Japanese thought that POWs must be obedient because the captor's benevolence saved their lives owing to Bushido. Thus, the POWs' defiance or disobedience irritated the Japanese. On the other hand, the British military regulation demands that POWs disturb the enemy's war effort. For the British, POWs are protected by the law, not saved by the enemy's mercy. Thus, the POWs cannot be punished for disobedience or disturbance without a proper trial. In light of the duty to disturb, working for the enemy was

nothing but humiliation even though the Japanese had to take brutal 'disciplinary' actions in finding sabotage or disturbance. Notably, the British POWs knew what consequences their disturbances to the enemy would bring to them, which was shown in a letter written by Lt. General Percival after the war. Percival wrote it when the famous film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was made, and expressed concern that a wrong image of the British POWs cooperating with the enemy could be created in public by the film. The letter says:

In the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps were British Servicemen of all three Fighting Services. These men had certain duties to perform as prisoners of war, one of which was to do the maximum damage to the Japanese war effort. This they did magnificently in the face of a ruthless enemy. They became sabotage experts. Many of them suffered severely, and many died as a result of their efforts.²⁸⁴

Such disturbances irritated the Japanese engineers who had different working ethics and objectives from the British.

The British POWs, especially officers, had their peculiar ethics, too. In general, officers should have a stronger sense of obligation than other ranks, which is often called *noblesse oblige*. Thus, the officer POWs were inclined to have stronger senses of responsibility, honour and pride, which made them refuse to cooperate with the enemy. Moreover, the officers had a thorough knowledge of their army's regulations and the consequences of their violation. In his memoirs, Bishop thought of the British servicemen's obligation, an escape attempt from their captor, as soon as their living conditions in the camp had improved. Bishop states as follows:

Renewed physical wellbeing, due to the better food, caused attention to turn to a long forgotten duty. A hazily remembered passage in King's Regulations obliges prisoners of war to discomfort the enemy by trying to escape. It seemed neglectful to loll in the sun, in a thinly guarded camp, and make no

²⁸⁴ TNA PRO WO32/16027, op. cit. Percival's letter.

attempt to gain freedom.²⁸⁵

Thus, to a certain extent, POWs' behaviour was under the influence of the British Army's regulations and discipline. In the Discipline of *The King's Regulations for the Army and the Army Reserve 1935*, the following was stipulated.

762. (a) Whenever officers or soldiers are taken prisoners by an enemy, a court of inquiry, under Rules of Procedure 124 and 125A, will be assembled under local arrangements to inquire into the conduct of the senior officer or soldier of the party, and, if the G.O.C.-in-C. considers it desirable, into the conduct of any other officers or soldiers of the party. The court will be composed of officers, and will be held as soon as possible after the return of the prisoners.²⁸⁶

Notably, such a court of inquiry was to be held with a declaration under oath, which meant that the military law would be applied as a court-martial. Rules of Procedure 124 says that:

When a court of inquiry is held on recovered prisoners of war, and in any other case in which the authority who assembled the court has so directed, the evidence will be taken on oath, in which case the court will administer the same oath or solemn declaration to witness as if the court were a court-martial.

The authority who assembled the court will, when the court is held on a returned prisoner of war, direct the court to record their opinion whether the officer or soldier concerned was taken prisoner by reason of the chances of war, or through neglect or misconduct on his part, and the authority who assembled the court will record his own opinion.

²⁸⁵ Bishop, p.45.

²⁸⁶ *The King's Regulations for the Army and the Army Reserve 1935* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1935), Discipline, Prisoner of War, Para.762, p.250.

Furthermore, in a court of inquiry on recovered POWs, the court members would make the declaration upon their honour, while in usual courts, they need not be sworn in.²⁸⁷

Thus, during their captivity, the British POWs had to rigidly follow the British Army's regulations to avoid such an inquiry after their release. Moreover, the Army Act prohibited British POWs from conducting themselves in specific ways, such as:

Having been made a prisoner of war, voluntarily serves with or voluntarily aids the enemy;²⁸⁸

Is taken prisoner, by want of due precaution, or through disobedience of orders, or wilful neglect of duty, or having been taken prisoner fails to rejoin His Majesty's service when able to rejoin the same;²⁸⁹

Hence, the British POWs had an obligation to escape from their captors when possible: they could be charged after their release if they had, or were suspected of having, cooperated with the enemy. Under such circumstances, the POWs' testimonies and reports submitted to the authorities would have a tendency to vilify the enemy. Especially, the officer POWs or career servicemen must have familiarised themselves with the army regulations and thus became stricter than other ranks or the conscripts.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, senior officers were in a difficult position as they had to protect their men and negotiate with the Japanese, who demanded their cooperation. The Japanese would react strictly to defiant POWs and treat well those who worked hard. For instance, Stephen Alexander recalls in his

²⁸⁷ War Office, *Manual of Military Law (MML) 1929* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1939), Rules of Procedure, Part II: Miscellaneous, Regulations for Courts of Inquiry, other than Courts of Inquiry held under Sec.72 of the Army Act, para.124, pp.687-8.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., The Army Act, Part I, Discipline, 4(5), p.427.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 5(3), p.428.

memoirs that "The Nips liked the 'Scotlanders' because they worked hard. There was certainly no doubt about their Scottishness".²⁹⁰ Thus, the senior officers got caught between their duty to disturb the enemy and their responsibility to protect the men by cooperating with the enemy.

Some flexible senior officers adopted a 'limited cooperation' strategy and succeeded in maintaining good terms with the captor to protect their men. Knights, Toosey, and Lt. Colonel Lilly are well-known POW commanders who adopted such a strategy. However, some officers criticised these commanders for appeasement and labelled them as 'Jap Happy' or Japanese co-operators. Presumably, Williamson could not overcome such criticism from the junior officers.

Notably, the flexible and successful POW commanders had working experiences in the civilian sector before becoming captive, whereas strict officers were career military personnel. Knights, who once worked in the industry, regarded himself as an amateur in a military sense and stated that he could "distinguish between the mind of the regular soldier, steeped in the traditions of the Service, and that of myself, whose lines of action must be influenced to some extent by a basic civilian background."²⁹¹ Also, Toosey had work experience as a merchant banker.

Importantly, Williamson, the Indian Army's career officer, had the flexibility to adopt a 'limited cooperation' strategy. Bishop recalls in his memoirs how Williamson adopted the policy. In the early stage of their captivity, the POW officers discussed whether they should supervise their men working on the railway. Williamson, who had been thought to be best able to judge the temper of the Japanese, told the officers that if they refused to go out with men, the Japanese intervention in the camp might become more frequent and more severe. Thus, the officers reluctantly accepted Williamson's suggestion that "they should continue to appear willing, while doing as little as was absolutely necessary."²⁹² Nevertheless, the policy seems to be half measures to secure the officers' privilege

²⁹⁰ Stephen Alexander, *Sweet Kwai Run Softly*, (Bristol: Merriotts, 1995), p.108.

²⁹¹ Knights, p12.

²⁹² Bishop, p.46.

and duty as Bishop described the officers' job before the OWP formation as follows:

The officers were still nominally in command of the groups of men with whom they had travelled, and, when their charges were sent out to work on the line, one officer from each group was expected to go with them and undertake the delicate task of smoothing out misunderstandings. Unpleasant incidents were few, and as the excursions provided a break from boredom, some contact with outside world and a more generous midday meal, they were not unwelcomed.²⁹³

The officers enjoyed their privileged position before January 1943, whereas their men were already put in a harsh situation.

Officer-men division

The most significant difference between officers and men was that the former received a regular allowance from the IJA whether they worked or not, while other ranks had to work for wages to sustain their nutrition or to enjoy a cigarette as well as to keep their spirit by purchasing goods in the canteen. The other option to gain money was to sell their belongings to locals, although it could not last for long. Thus, working was the only option for other ranks to sustain their lives. Unlike the officers' duty-privilege dilemma, the other ranks' thirst for survival seems to be straightforward on a visceral level and could be a just cause to work for the enemy. Hence, flexibility was needed.

In contrast, the officers' labour, including chores in the camp, was a sensitive issue even among the POWs. For instance, when Robert Hardie, a British medical officer of the No.2 camp, formed an officers party to work on the anti-malaria scheme at Chungkai, some officers opposed it. In his diary, Hardie explains that:

There is a fairly good-sized party of officers detailed for this scheme. Some of them are hard workers but a number are very reluctant and Major W heads a

²⁹³ Bishop, p.41.

party that holds that this work should not be done by officers.²⁹⁴

Even other ranks criticised the officers who did not work at all. In his memoirs, Jack Chalker criticises some officers for squabbling and using their rank to avoid working as nauseating and states that “Later, much to our delight, our Japanese Commandant ordered a party of officers from the neighbouring camp to work on the railway.”²⁹⁵ Chalker and other men’s feelings are understandable considering the officers’ life in Chungkai up to the OWP Incident. Bishop describes their life as follows:

The camp settled down to an uninspired routine of work and boredom. The huts now occupied most of the field, leaving little room for exercise, and time passed slowly for those who stayed in during the day. After drawing water, and washing themselves and their clothes, there was nothing to do but return to their bed-space and read, or sit and wait for the next meal. To relieve the monotony some turned to bridge, shuffling and dealing packs of greasy cards for minute stakes.²⁹⁶

Notably, when the workforce on the railway became short owing to the men’s fatigue and sickness, it was not only the Japanese but also other ranks POWs who hoped that the officers, having been idle and legally protected, would work.

Thus, the Chungkai OWP Incident had an emotional aspect framed by a complex combination of various factors such as antagonism, humiliation, resentment, consideration, honour and responsibility. The existing account of the Incident shaped by Tarumoto's war crimes trial represents a legal aspect primarily, but emotions could appear even in the court evidence. For instance, in his affidavit, Hall blamed Tarumoto and Kiriyaama for humiliating the British officers to be

²⁹⁴ Robert Hardie, *The Burma-Siam Railway: The Secret Diary of Dr Robert Hardie, 1942-45*, (London: IWM, 1983), p.53.

²⁹⁵ Jack Chalker, *Burma Railway Artist: The War Drawings of Jack Chalker*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1994), p.67.

²⁹⁶ Bishop, p.42.

comparable to the native labourers in front of the men.²⁹⁷ Undoubtedly, Tarumoto made an enemy of the British officers for the OWP Incident. In his memoirs, Tarumoto recalls Captain Alexander's sincere advice that the formation of the OWP would not be good for Tarumoto's future. Notably, both Alexander and Tarumoto recognised that the British officers did not see Tarumoto as a 'brutal' commandant until the Incident. Indeed, at that Friday meeting, the POW Command requested that Tarumoto be the OWP's supervisor.²⁹⁸ Thus, the Incident was the turning point for Tarumoto and the British officers to form an emotional entanglement.

Wan Lung incident

There is another incident that consolidated Tarumoto's 'brutal' image among the POWs, in which Lt. Col. Swinton, the Wan Lung Camp commandant, was a key person. After the war, Swinton submitted to the court of Tarumoto's trial an unsworn statement as follows:

I was POW Commandant at WAN LUNG Camp on or about 27th December 1942. Orders were given by the IJA that Officers should do manual labour on the Thai-Burma Railway. Accordingly I paraded the Officers as ordered by the Japanese Commandant who personally gave them orders to go to work. Just after they had marched off, a demonstration with ball ammunition was staged by the IJA Engineers.

I was questioned on parade by the Engineer officer in charge. All the Officer and all the sick men in camp were ordered on to parade, and after a Japanese inspection many were ordered out to work. The Japanese Engineer Officer was dissatisfied with the number which I and my medical officers considered fit for work. We were accused of non-cooperation and of falsifying my camp returns.

I, together with my four senior medical officers, were marched out in front of the parade.

²⁹⁷ TNA PRO WO235/857, Lieut. Hall's Affidavit.

²⁹⁸ Tarumoto, p.368.

I was then publicly assaulted by Lieut. Tarimoto and Lieut. Kiriyaama by being struck on the face by each of them about eight times.²⁹⁹

Judging from Swinton's statement, there was another OWP incident at Wan Lung before the Chungkai Incident. Swinton's statement corresponds to Lt. Colonel S.P. Fearons' recollection as follows:

The British officers, therefore, refused to work and the Japanese denied them rations. When it became obvious that they would die, their own Commandant ordered them to comply, emphasising that it was his order and they must obey him. This was a quibble but it meant a lot to them. Shep led out the first party of those officers who were sufficiently fit to go out. When they get a little way, they met a Japanese firing squad with rifles pointed at them. He drew his men to attention and the Japanese fired over their heads.³⁰⁰

However, it should be noted that the 'IJA Engineers' in Swinton's first paragraph were not 'Tarumoto and Kiriyaama' in the fourth paragraph, although the statement's title was 'Statement of Indictment against: Lieut. Tarimoto, Lieut. Kiriyaama, Railway Engineers'. Tarumoto and Kiriyaama were platoon commandants at Chungkai, not Wan Lung at that time, although they got involved in the physical assault against Swinton at Wan Lung. Tarumoto recollects the incident in detail in his memoirs.

According to Tarumoto, the assault incident occurred shortly after the Chungkai OWP Incident. On an unknown date in January 1943, Tarumoto and Kiriyaama visited Wan Lung, where the Nakamura Company's HQ was located, to talk about personnel affairs. After the talk, Lieut. Takizawa, the engineer platoon commandant in the area, asked Tarumoto and Kiriyaama to help with physical examinations of POWs, many of whom were absent from the work on the ground

²⁹⁹ TNA PRO WO235/857. 'Statement of Indictment against: Lieut. Tarimoto, Lieut. Kiriyaama, Railway Engineers' by Lt. Col. Swinton.

³⁰⁰ Liddell-Hart Centre, King's College London, 'Document of S.P. Fearon, "A Memoir: Prisoner of War"'.

of sickness. The absence was causing a delay in the construction. Thus, Tarumoto helped the physical examinations as a translator. Nobusawa, the No.2 Camp's Japanese medical officer, happened to be at Wan Lung, and Lieut. Kokubo, the Japanese camp commandant, was also present. Thus, Takizawa, Kokubo and Nakamura had already agreed that the examinations be carried out. Then, Swinton was called. The Japanese asked him a question about the numbers of fit men and sick ones. When Swinton answered totally different figures from what the Japanese knew, the Japanese suspected he was telling a lie. Then, Kiriya got angry and tried to hit Swinton and asked Nakamura for permission. Nakamura said that it would be better to ask Swinton whether he was not telling a lie and warn him that a lie would result in a punishment. Here, Tarumoto translated these words into English. Swinton nodded silently. The Japanese counted the POWs' number, which showed a substantial difference from what Swinton said. Thus, Swinton was strongly slapped by Kiriya. Later Tarumoto heard that many POWs were found to be malingering and taken to work. This is Tarumoto's account of the assault against Swinton at Wan Lung.

Tarumoto points out that Swinton, a British upper-class family member, must have been overwhelmed by a sense of humiliation when a Japanese low-ranking officer slapped him in front of his subordinates.³⁰¹ Indeed, Swinton concluded his statement with the words that the beating was not severe, but he was publicly insulted in the presence of most of the officers under his command.³⁰² Furthermore, Swinton became a war crimes investigator after the war.³⁰³ Incidentally, among the Japanese who were present at the incident, Kokubo and Nobusawa were sentenced to death after the war.

³⁰¹ Tarumoto, p.385.

³⁰² TNA PRO WO235/857. Swinton's statement.

³⁰³ Tarumoto, p.114; TNA PRO WO325/157, 'The file of war crimes investigation' Swinton signed an indictment sheet as a member of the investigation team. Lt. Col. Owtram was also a team member; Swinton retired from the Royal Surrey Regiment in December 1946. For Swinton's information, see the website:
(http://www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk/colonels_and_co/commanding_officers/east_surrey/lt-col-ge-swinton.shtml)

Nobusawa, nicknamed Horse Doctor by the POWs, was known as an ill-reputed, cruel medical officer. Bishop described Nobusawa's cruelty in his memoirs. After the OWP moved to another camp from Chungkai, Bishop, remaining at the Chungkai hospital, experienced a sick parade conducted by Nobusawa. When flaws were found on the embankment surface that the officers had built, the Japanese requested that the POWs remaining at Chungkai should repair the embankment. However, the British medical officers replied that less than forty POWs were fit for work. However, the Japanese demanded a hundred and sent Nobusawa to examine the sick. While conducting the examinations, Nobusawa said: "In my experience, the best cure for dysentery is work." Eventually, Nobusawa pronounced eighty POWs fit to work and demanded that this number be kept every day. Bishop was one of them.³⁰⁴

Although Nobusawa's words sound cruel, it was sarcasm for malingerers. In fact, Bishop recalls that when the OWP left the camp, some officers remained at Chungkai with feigned illness, also some officers and men exploited trivial ailments to avoid the journey upriver. These POWs stayed at the camp hospital for "the cure of imaginary fevers and treatment of sores, which, at the first sign of healing were remorselessly prodded into a more convincing state of inflammation."³⁰⁵ Thus, the Japanese had to deal with the malinger by the strict sick parade.

Interestingly, some POWs mistakenly perceived Nobusawa's words as Tarumoto's in their affidavits. For instance, Capt. Caley, a British Medical Officer, states that Tarumoto, taking the position that 'the cure for dysentery was work', forced those who could hardly walk to work.³⁰⁶ Also, Lieut. Watt states that he heard Tarumoto, notorious for his brutal treatment of the sick, say in English to an officer suffering from dysentery that 'the cure for dysentery is work'.³⁰⁷

The same confusion can be found in some officers' memoirs. For instance, Adams states that:

³⁰⁴ Bishop, pp.81-2.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p.79.

³⁰⁶ TNA PRO WO235/857. Capt. Caley's affidavit.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., Lieut. Watt's affidavit.

Captains Teremoto and Takazawa, 'The Two Terrible Ts', were both dedicated to the dreaded 'speedo', and quite merciless when it came to the invalid. Teremoto's maxim was 'The best cure for dysentery is work!' [...].³⁰⁸

Also, Coast states that:

Taramoto then ordered a Medical Inspection of all officers. The Horse Doctor took the parade, and our own MOs had no say at all, Taramoto and Keriama accompanied him up and down the ranks, laughing and giggling. Men with grey hair and 25 years' work in the East had to work; dysentery cases, said Taramoto, could only be cured by work; and ulcers on the legs, after being kicked by Keriama's jackboots were not considered worth examining. Get them all out was the policy, and out we all went, starting that very afternoon at two o'clock.³⁰⁹

However, according to Coast's recollection, this sick parade was held at Chungkai on the day of the OWP Incident. These discrepancies between the POWs might imply that their narratives were influenced by hearsay prevalent in the No.2 Camp.

In his memoirs, Tarumoto stated that he had arranged with Nobusawa to prevent the officer POWs' malingering. According to Tarumoto, at first, no medical certificates were required for the officers to be absent from work. However, as their absence gradually increased, Tarumoto decided to require the officers to submit a medical certificate made by their medical officers. Nevertheless, the POW medical officers issued certificates so easily that Tarumoto tightened the rule and demanded a certificate made by the Japanese medical officer. Thus, Tarumoto asked Nobusawa to make simple certificates for the officers. Afterwards, an officer POW complained to Tarumoto that their men could obtain certificates from the POW medical officers, whereas the officers needed Japanese ones, which was not fair. Tarumoto replied that it was the officers

³⁰⁸ Adams, p.108.

³⁰⁹ Coast, p.79.

who caused that situation.³¹⁰

The close cooperation between Tarumoto and Nobusawa might have caused confusion among the POWs who had an antipathy towards the two Japanese. Eventually, Tarumoto escaped the death penalty, whereas Nobusawa was executed by hanging, although a British medical officer sent a letter for his mitigation to the confirming officer.³¹¹

Besides, another mix-up might have happened between 'The Two Terrible Ts' – Tarumoto and Takizawa. Indeed, as mentioned above, the Swinton Incident's sick parade was led by Takizawa with Tarumoto's help as an interpreter. Thus, the possibility cannot be ruled out that Tarumoto's brutal image was amplified and diffused among the POWs by these mix-ups.

In fact, in his memoirs, Adams described Tarumoto's different face found directly from conversations with Tarumoto in the later stage of the construction. Adams state that:

Later on, when the railway came close to our corral and threatened to cut us off from our pastures, I had quite a lot of dealings with the other 'Terrible T', Teremoto, and we had numerous conversations in English together. This indefatigable advocate of the bamboo demonstrated that he, too, could be quite human on occasions; but talking to him was never a comfortable business. A volcano isn't dead simply because it isn't permanently in a state of eruption.³¹²

Adam's recollection implies that Tarumoto's notoriousness was shaped by hearsay and accepted by most POWs without directly talking with him. Here, the Chungkai OWP Incident and the ensuing emotional entanglement seems to have influenced Tarumoto's bad reputation in the POWs' narratives.

The disturbing the war effort and the sick parade

³¹⁰ Tarumoto, pp.380-1.

³¹¹ TNA PRO WO235/957. Brigadier Davis' report.

³¹² Adams, p.114.

The sick parade conducted by the Japanese was a countervailing measure against the POWs' malingering. On the other hand, it was a duty for the British servicemen to disturb the enemy's war effort by sabotaging the construction work or going slow. Regarding the men's attitudes towards work, Alexander pointed out that:

Some were natural skivers, some felt themselves in honour bound to do as little Japanese war work as possible, and some simply could not do any work without taking some pride in it.³¹³

Therefore, it is believed that the Japanese introduced the task system to motivate the POWs to work. However, the system was first proposed by the POW Command to the Japanese. The POW Command's concern was that the men's low morale and the delay of the work would result in exasperation of the Japanese, who would drag sick men to work, and would cause more sickness. To break this fatal circle, Toosey and fellow officers decided to suggest to the Japanese that the POWs should be given taskwork and left to organise it themselves. Alexander states that "it stopped the skivers from claiming to be more patriotic than their fellows, and ensured that everyone did their fair share."³¹⁴ In return, however, some accused the POW Command of being 'Jap-Happy'. Also, the No.2 Camp's record states that the POW Command requested the introduction of the task system in a Friday meeting.³¹⁵

Nevertheless, an NCO POW at the No.2 Camp reveals the truth of the POW Command's policy, which cannot be found in the officers' accounts. Sergeant. L.L. Baynes, who worked at Chungkai in the initial phase of the construction, states in his memoirs as follows:

Then on the thirteenth of November, our third day in Chungkai, we paraded soon after dawn for our first day's work on the now infamous railway. An

³¹³ Alexander, p.114.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p.115.

³¹⁵ Hiroike, p.164-5.

English officer in the camp warned us to work at a reasonable speed, without trying to hurry. If we completed our measured task too early, then the next day both ours and everyone else's would be increased. Should the Japs think we were deliberately on a 'go-slow' on the other hand, we would be punished. "Try therefore to find a happy medium", he concluded.³¹⁶

According to Baynes, on the first day on the railway construction, the party's Japanese engineer said that 'Finish your task and you can return to camp, even if it is before midday', but they went on a go-slow and finished in the rain at about half-past eight in the evening.³¹⁷ During the night, the camp flooded severely, and the work was suspended the next day. Baynes recalls how his party worked after the flood:

The next morning we went to work on the railroad, determined this time not to repeat our first performance. We were on our way back to camp by half past two in the afternoon, our daily task completed. That evening the British Lt.-Colonel in charge of Chungkai camp came to give us a talking to. He stressed the importance of making our work last the whole day, if we did not he assured us, our tasks would most certainly be increased.³¹⁸

The POW Command's policy can be explained by the officers' dilemma. By spending a whole day to finish the task, they tried to hamper the work to accelerate. However, depriving the men of spare time after the early completion of their task, the policy could cause adverse effects on their physical and mental conditions. Thus, the merit of the task system was caught in the middle.

Nevertheless, the decision by the POW Command at the No.2 Camp had a point. In his memoirs, Coast criticises the task system as follows:

Now at first Task Work seemed a reasonable idea. [...] Altogether, I believe,

³¹⁶ L.L. Baynes, *Kept: the Other Side of Tenko* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1984), p.83.

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp.83-84.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.86.

to the Nip surprise, it worked once, and one East Anglian section actually got one and a half day's holiday. But never again! As a task neared completion after four or five days of burning, blistering hard work, so the Nips found a hole here, not enough grass there, another place not levelled elsewhere, and so on, until eventually holidays came not at all. [...] Task work, from our point of view, was finished.³¹⁹

Coast argues that the Japanese broke the promise of the task system. However, in such a system, the supervisor could keep the promise only after the workers ensured the quality of their work. Here, the task system needed to be based on mutual trust. Accordingly, the relationship between the POWs and the Japanese could affect the situation. It is almost certain that Coast, a member of the OWP under Tarumoto, did not trust his supervisor.

According to Tarumoto, the OWP under his supervision was at first defiant and idle and thus annoyed the IJA engineers. Consequently, some engineers beat the officer POWs, and both sides often made complaints to Tarumoto, who then ordered his men not to hit the officers with the words that he would if necessary. Tarumoto admits that when seeing the officers' defiance or disturbance, he slapped them.³²⁰ This recollection corresponds to Lieut. Raymond's affidavit as follows:

We started work under Japanese soldiers with Tarumoto as general supervisor, he was responsible for that particular section of the railway. I was with a party who were carrying irons, and Lieutenant Hepworth and I were carrying these along, and got tired and rested, but Tarumoto came and saw us, and slapped us and made us go on.³²¹

Nevertheless, things began to change. Tarumoto states that the OWP gradually

³¹⁹ Coast, p.75.

³²⁰ Tarumoto, pp.100-5.

³²¹ TNA PRO WO235/857, Lieut. Raymond's affidavit.

became disciplined and efficient in the work.³²² This recollection corresponds to Bishop's narrative about the bridge construction at Chungkai as follows:

The work was not hard, nor were the hours long. The party was divided into three gangs. While one gang pulled at the ropes, another prepared the next pole, and the third rested. As the poles needed little trimming, no one worked for more than three hours a day. Every tenth day was a holiday. After backs had become hardened to the sun, and our hands to the ropes, we even gained some benefit from the regular exercise.³²³

After building the bridge, the officer POWs were sent to the subsequent work further upstream. In his memoirs, Bishop complains about the treatment there: the guards and engineers were sullen and aggressive for no reason and would inflict a furious assault on them with any weapon that lay to hand for a slight misunderstanding.³²⁴ Even the experience of the OWP varied at different times from person to person. After all, the work on the railway reflected numerous speculations of various groups, and Tarumoto's notorious reputation was simply a manifestation of complex emotions and calculations of both sides.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how the POWs constructed Tarumoto's ill repute as a brutal commandant with various sources: the court evidence of Tarumoto's trial and the memoirs of ex-POWs and the Japanese. It was found that a purely legal standpoint for Tarumoto's charges would hinder the sound understanding of what happened on the railway. Indeed, by comparing and contrasting the stylised court evidence and the freely written memoirs, a picture emerged quite different from the existing account. Notably, specific facts were omitted from the legal documents and neither covered by the press nor discussed by scholars. This chapter revealed

³²² Tarumoto, p.104.

³²³ Bishop, pp.75-6.

³²⁴ Ibid., p.78.

that the omission implies something emotional and cultural lying in the gap between the British and the Japanese.

The Chungkai OWP Incident exemplified the cultural difference between the British and the Japanese regarding the understanding of the superiors' orders, the officers' status, and the obligation in captivity. Presumably, the lack of mutual understanding amplified the officer POWs' resentment towards Tarumoto who formed the OWP. Although Tarumoto escaped the death sentence with the remission of his original charge at the end of the trial, Tarumoto's 'brutal' image remains in the prevailing narrative on the railway. The narrative shaped by the officers through the trial is still influential on the railway's reputation.

Besides, the British officers submitted numerous reports on the railway to the military authorities, which formed the official account of the railway construction. Accordingly, the Allied official reports have impacted scholars' works substantially, whereas the Japanese documents have been underestimated. The next chapter will explore these official reports.

Chapter 3: Figures of POWs and Labourers

Introduction

When surrendering, the IJA authorities ordered the destruction of all the documents and records to disturb the Allied forces' efforts to reconstruct the war's information. Indeed, many secret documents were burned, but many documents of the Japanese Governmental and military are still preserved. Regarding the construction of the Burma-Thailand Railway, little did the Japanese expect that they would be charged for the violations of the laws of war after the surrender. Thus, many documents and records on the railway and POW camps escaped the destruction and thus were submitted to the Allied authorities such as war crimes investigators and military courts.

However, Japanese sources have been regarded as unreliable and inaccurate by officials and scholars. Kratoska, comparing various data in the Allied reports with those in the Japanese, quotes Professor B.R. Pearn, who worked at the Foreign Office as of 1954, as follows:

There seems to be no means of reconciling these discrepancies. No doubt the Japanese either deliberately underestimated or, more probably under the conditions of late 1945, had no accurate records.³²⁵

It seems a little hasty to quote the passage without verifying Japanese data because Pearn's words are potent enough to give readers a biased view of Japanese records. In his report to the British Government, Pearn states that:

The numbers of POWs given by SEATIC are markedly higher than those in the Japanese statement; so are the numbers of casualties. The SEATIC data are likely to be more accurate. They show 61,806 POWs and 12,399 deaths. They also show 269,948 local coolies employed and 72,996 deaths. The Japanese statement gives only 50,000 POWs, among whom there were 10,000

³²⁵ Kratoska, Vol.1, p.15.

deaths, and 100,000 coolies, among whom there were 30,000 deaths.³²⁶

As Pearn mentioned, these figures are from the SEATIC Brett report, compiled by Brett, a Canadian intelligence officer, in 1946. Prosecutors often cited this report in the war crimes trials, which implies its influence over officials and scholars. Indeed, the report contains large amounts of data, but they are mainly based on the Allied sources with some supplement from Japanese records. Thus, it seems necessary to look at more Japanese sources and verify the figures thoroughly. Little is known to Western scholars that, in the IJA, numbers and statistics were so crucial that IJA personnel always stuck to them even if they were only nominal figures. This unique practice is called *inzu-shugi*, or the 'counting-numbers' principle: the Japanese word '*inzu (insu)*' means 'the number to be counted', and '*shugi*' means 'a principle'. The IJA's strict recording practice influenced the servicemen's behaviour and thus the POWs' life there. This chapter will examine the difference in the figures between the Japanese records and the Allied reports.

Data provided by the Japanese

Pearn's report states that the Japanese provided the POWs' figures as follows: the total number employed on the railway – 50,000; the number of deaths – 10,000. Nevertheless, it is not clear where the figures came from. In his memoirs, Major General Ishida, the Railway Corps Commander since mid-August 1943, recollects the total strength of those who were working on the railway as of September 1943 as follows:³²⁷

Japanese: 10,000

POWs: 60,000

Malay, Chinese Thai labourers: 40,000

Burmese labourers: 3,000

³²⁶ TNA PRO FO371/112291, 'Paper on Siam-Burma Railway', pp.2-3.

³²⁷ Ishida, p.99.

Also, Ishida states the death toll between the end of 1942 to October 1943 as follows:³²⁸

Japanese: 1,000

POWs: 7-8,000

Labourers: 10,000

Notably, the Railway Corps Commander clearly recognised that the POWs' total strength on the railway was 60,000. Regarding the POWs' death toll, it should be taken into consideration that the figure is for the period up to the completion of the railway construction. Death toll figures depend on which duration to adopt: Ishida took the pure construction period; Allied reports usually adopt the period up to Japan's surrender in August 1945, even including the death toll from the Allied air raids. Thus, the figures should be compared in the same timeframe.

Then, where did the total number '50,000 POWs' in a Japanese record come from? Presumably, the figure came from the IHQ's order. According to Hiroike, in June 1942, the IHQ promised the Railway Corps that 50,000 POWs would be engaged in the construction.³²⁹ Thus, Hiroike made the construction plan based on the workforce of 50,000 POWs with the participation rate as fifty per cent.³³⁰ Nevertheless, Hiroike states that the total strength of POWs became 55,000 in the end.³³¹

Table.1 Hiroike's records regarding the number of POWs

No.1 Camp – 7,200	No.5 Camp – 2,000
No.2. Camp – 9,600	No.6 Camp – 6,000
No.3. Camp – 9,000	F Force – 7,000
No.4. Camp – 11,200	H Force – 3,000

³²⁸ Ibid., p.100.

³²⁹ Hiroike, p.151.

³³⁰ Ibid., p.234.

³³¹ Ibid., p.148.

However, there is still a large gap between 55,000 and 60,000. It is intriguing what caused such a difference, notwithstanding Hiroike's important position with easy access to any information in the Railway Corps. Thus, Hiroike's account is worth examining.

Here, the existence of the POWs' advance party is the key. According to Hiroike, the Thai POW Camp started to function in mid-October 1942, four months after the Railway Corps received the 'preparation' order in June. During these four months, the Railway Corps conducted the POW administration as 3,000 POWs had already been in Thailand and 1,240 in Burma from late June to early July.³³²

On or around 18 June, Hiroike was informed that the Thai POW Camp would be established to deal with the POW administration but that the camp formation would be on 15 August and the camp accommodation would be ready in mid-October after the two-month training of Korean guards.³³³ However, before the camp preparation was completed, some POW groups had already been dispatched to Thailand and Burma to assist the railway work. In Thailand, 3,000 POWs worked under the 9th Railway Regiment, and in Burma, 1,240 under the 5th Railway Regiment. These 4,240 POWs were the first POWs that worked on the railway and were under the Railway Corps' direct command for four months until October 1942.³³⁴

Hiroike's information about the POWs' advance party corresponds to a Thai official's report, according to which a group of 675 POWs arrived on 30 June at the barracks in Ban Pong, where 2,500 POWs were already staying.³³⁵ Moreover, J.K. Gale, an ex-POW, testified in the trial of Ishida and three others that a small preliminary advance party had been sent in May or June 1942 to Ban Pong.³³⁶ Therefore, it is certain that as of 1 July, approximately 3,000 POWs were staying in Ban Pong.

³³² Ibid., p.136.

³³³ Ibid., p.132.

³³⁴ Ibid., pp.135-6.

³³⁵ Yoshikawa, p41. Thai document [Bok.Sungsut, 2.4.1.2/3].

³³⁶ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.101.

Besides, Tarumoto states that, on 10 September 1942, his platoon reached Chungkai, where their mission was to remove a rock formation. At this point, there were no living facilities there. On 15 September, from the No.2 POW Camp stationed at Ban Pong, 60 POWs arrived at Chungkai led by Sergeant Jotani, a Japanese camp staff. They were the first POW party that arrived at Chungkai, and their mission was to build camp houses. Here, a conflict occurred between Tarumoto and Jotani: the former wanted to use the POWs for the rock-removing work, but the latter insisted that they had to build their camp facilities first as Chungkai would be the base of the No.2 Camp.³³⁷ After a talk, it was decided that Tarumoto could use half of them for his work. Tarumoto recollects that in late September or early October, the No.2 Camp moved its base to Chungkai, and 500 POWs became available for the railway work.³³⁸

According to Hiroike, on 1 October 1942, 1,200 out of the 3,000 POWs under the 9th Railway Regiment were transferred to the No.1 POW Camp, and 1,800 to the No.2 Camp. However, 1,000 out of the 1,800 POWs were already sick, and only 800 were fit to work.³³⁹ Thus, on 9 October, the No.2 Camp left Ban Pong for Chungkai with the 800 POWs marching for the 39km in three days. Nevertheless, 200 POWs fell behind during the march, and seriously ill patients were sent back to Ban Pong.³⁴⁰ In short, 600 POWs could arrive at Chungkai on 11 October, which roughly corresponds to Tarumoto's recollection.

However, Hiroike's record began to be in discord with others from October 1942. As the Thai POW Camp was formally established on 15 August 1942, Commander Sassa issued orders on 16 August to form three branches – the Nos.1, 2 and 3 Camps. The No.1 Camp, cooperating with the 3rd Battalion of the 9th Railway Regiment, was to accommodate 7,200 POWs; the No.2 camp, working with the 1st and 2nd Battalions, accommodate 9,600; the No.3 camp, cooperating with the 5th Railway Regiment in Burma, 9,000 POWs. In total, 25,800 POWs were to be accommodated at the three camps. On 1 October, Sassa issued another order

³³⁷ Tarumoto, p.28.

³³⁸ Ibid., pp.35-6.

³³⁹ Hiroike, p153.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p153.

to establish the No.4 camp to accommodate 11,200 POWs in Thailand, the largest camp group along the railway. Thus, as of 1 October, 37,000 POWs were to be accommodated to the four camps in total. Notably, the POWs' movement was yet to start at this point; they were to be transported from Singapore. Hiroike states that on the Thai side, 17,000 POWs arrived between October and December 1942 and 20,000 between February and June 1943.³⁴¹ Notably, Hiroike included the advance party's 3,000 POWs in the dispatch of 17,000.³⁴² In short, Hiroike took it that 14,000 POWs arrived in Thailand between October and December.

However, a MOW document contradicts Hiroike's account. On 11 October 1942, the Commander of the Malaya POW Camp sent a telegram to the Chief of the POW Information Bureau and reported that the Malaya POW Camp had started to transfer 17,000 POWs to the Thai POW Camp, dispatching 650 POWs a day by train from 9 October until 3 November.³⁴³

Besides, the Thai authorities recorded the number of POWs entering and leaving Ban Pong. Yoshikawa found the record in the Thai archives and compiled it as a table.³⁴⁴ According to the Thai record, 17,450 British POWs were transported from Singapore to Ban Pong between October and December 1942. Moreover, 20,415 POWs, including the Dutch POWs and F and H Forces, went through Ban Pong between January and May 1943. Notably, the Thai authorities recorded that, on 9 October, 2,000 British POWs moved from Ban Pong to Kanchanaburi. This movement indicates that the advance party's 2,000 POWs vacated Ban Pong for the newly arriving POWs, whose first batch consisting of 600 arrived on 13 October. Therefore, the Thai record supports the MOW's document and proves Hiroike's miscalculation regarding the advance party.

The Japanese and the Thai records roughly correspond to POWs' testimonies. For instance, in the trial of Ishida and three others, Harry Jones, the 3rd

³⁴¹ Ibid., p.235.

³⁴² Ibid., p.149.

³⁴³ JACAR, Ref.C01000730000. Rikuamitsu Dainikki, Vol.47, 2 of 2, 1942(NIDS), 'Fushu Irai Den(Telegram) No.967 on commencing POW transport to Thailand'.

³⁴⁴ Yoshikawa, p.110-112, based on [Bok.Sungsut. 1.13/20; 2.5.2/4; 2.7.6/21.]

Prosecution Witness, answered the prosecutor's question as follows:

Q. You left Singapore for Thailand about November 1942 in a part of 500 or 600 persons?

A. Yes.

Q. Were there many such parties going?

A. Towards the end of October, one or two parties were leaving every day.³⁴⁵

The table below shows the number of POWs arriving at Ban Pong between October and December 1942, recorded by the Thai authorities.

Table 2: British POWs arriving at Ban Pong between Oct. and Dec. 1942³⁴⁶

October	November	December
13 October – 600	1 November – 650	3 December – 1,500
14 October – 650	2 November – 675	
15 October – 650	3 November – 650	
16 October – 700	4 November – 650	
17 October – 650	5 November – 650	
18 October – 400	6 November – 650	
18 October – 400	7 November – 620	
19 October – 600	8 November – 650	
21 October – 675	9 November – 600	
25 October – 550	10 November – 700	
26 October – 650		
27 October – 630		
28 October – 400		
29 October – 650		
30 October – 650		
31 October – 600		

³⁴⁵ TNA PRO WO235/963, Harry Jones' testimony, p.79.

³⁴⁶ Yoshikawa, p.110-111.

In terms of the movement's scale and timing, Jones' testimony corresponds to the Thai record and the Malay POW Camp's telegram on 11 October 1942. Furthermore, in the same trial, Gale testified that his group arrived at Ban Pong on 15 or 16 October as one of the first batches of the main parties.³⁴⁷ Gale's testimony also accords with the records of the Thais and the Japanese.

It is unknown why the misunderstanding occurred between the Railway Corps' Chief of Staff and the Malay POW Camp Command in dealing with the advance party. Whatever the reason may be, the total POWs count by Tarumoto – 55,000 should be added by 4,240 for the advance party in both Thailand and Burma. Thus, the total strength of POWs employed for the railway construction should be approximately 60,000. Except for the misunderstanding between the two organs in the IJA, the total strength figure provided by the Japanese accords with the Allied forces' record.

Presumably, it was more difficult for the Railway Corps than the POW Camp to grasp the exact numbers of POWs who would move intermittently between camps along the line. Notably, the IJA could not dispatch 60,000 POWs at once alongside construction materials and foods into the jungle where no transport had been established. For instance, on 23 November 1942, an order was issued to establish the No.5 Camp, cooperating with the 2nd Battalion, the 5th Railway Regiment in Burma, to accommodate 2,000 POWs, making the total strength in the five camps 39,000 on paper. However, it was in February 1943, three months after the order issuance, that the No.5 Camp POWs arrived at Thanbyuzayat, the starting point on the Burma side.³⁴⁸

In March 1943, the No.6 Camp was established to accommodate 6,000 POWs to cooperate with the 6th Company, the 9th Railway Regiment in Thailand. The No.2 Camp's record states that in March 1943, the number of patient POWs rose rapidly in the Nos.2 and 4 Camps, and thus the POWs' participation rate fell below 30 per cent. As a result, Commander Takasaki of the Railway Corps asked the higher authorities to send more POWs, which led to the formation of the No.6

³⁴⁷ TNA PRO WO235/963. Gale's Testimony, p.101.

³⁴⁸ Hiroike, p.148.

Camp to help the 6th Company at Hindat.³⁴⁹ At this point, in total, 45,000 POWs were distributed to the six camp groups on paper, whereas the railway system between Singapore and Thailand could transport only 650 POWs a day and took much time to complete the POWs' movement.

Furthermore, the dispatch of additional POWs from the Malaya POW Camp caused further confusion. In early February 1943, the IHQ issued an order to shorten the construction period by four months: the railway had to be completed by the end of August.³⁵⁰ Thus, the so-call 'Speedo' rush-work period began in March. Accordingly, the Malaya POW Camp's No.4 Branch was dispatched to Thailand in April with 7,000 POWs, and No.5 Branch in May with 3,000 POWs. The former is called F Force, and the latter H Force. The tragedy of the two forces was partly due to their belonging to the Malaya POW Camp, even in Thailand, where the Thai POW Camp was operating.

Despite those factors which might hinder accurate statistics of the POWs, the Japanese managed to keep relatively accurate records that correspond to the Allied figures compiled after the war. Here, the IJA's peculiar practice in counting numbers played a crucial role.

Counting-numbers principle

Regarding the POWs' death toll, the Japanese records were accurate but fragmented for some reason. Combined into one, the IJA record reaches 11,200 POW deaths up to August 1944.³⁵¹ Making up for the loss of the record between September 1944 and August 1945, the IJA figure would be much closer to the record compiled by the Allied forces after the war. Thus, it is not the case that the Japanese hid or undercounted inconvenient figures. While Western scholars are often sceptical about Japanese records' accuracy, little is known among them that the IJA personnel were required to keep as accurate records as possible. This is

³⁴⁹ No.2 Camp's record quoted in Hiroike, p.234.

³⁵⁰ Ishida, p.107; Hiroike, p212.

³⁵¹ JACAR, Ref.C14060512200. 'POW use situation in line with Thai-Burmese railway construction investigation report from June, 1942 to October, 1943' (NIDS), Tables & Charts.

one of the IJA's peculiar cultures, although often leading to excessive behaviour.

In the IJA, the numbers of items, bullets, munitions, guns, and soldiers were strictly recorded and reported to the headquarters. Shichihei Yamamoto, a former IJA subaltern, explains that everything, including personnel, had to be counted to check the official accounting book's consistency to prevent fraud. However, the IJA servicemen began to put such importance on reconciling their reports with the official records that a corrupt practice called *inzu-shugi* or the 'counting-numbers principle' was created, in which nominal figures became much more prioritised than substance. For instance, a broken gun could be counted as usable to make up the figure on the record. For a Japanese soldier, discordance with the official records was a sin.³⁵² Yamamoto pointed out that this corrupt practice poisoned the IJA from top to bottom. Soldiers were afraid of disciplinary actions by the superior when they could not meet the right number. Yamamoto comments that it was the IJA's most corrupt practice.³⁵³ The POWs were not the exception of this peculiar principle and thus always tired of *tenko* or the Japanese-style roll calls, indispensable for the practice.

Besides, the IJA's regulation provided that each POW camp send a monthly report about POWs' current situation to the POW Information Bureau, the MOW. Based on the POW camps' reports, the Bureau compiled the POW Monthly Report. Thus, the IJA clerks in POW camps had to keep the record as accurately as possible. The accuracy of the Japanese recording practice can be supported by Gale's testimony in the trial of Ishida and three others. Regarding the IJA's system to count the number of the POWs, Gale testified that:

The Japanese Administrative Office at Tamuang Camp kept a card index system of prisoners-of-war. Two of these clerks, Sgt. McEwan and Lance Bombardier Webster set out to analyse the strength and death figures as shown in these cards, and they reported the result officially to the British

³⁵² Shichihei Yamamoto, *Ichi Kakyu Shoko no Mita Teikoku Rikugun (The IJA that a low-ranking officer saw)* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 1987), pp.134-140.

³⁵³ Ibid., p.134.

Camp Administration of which I was Chief Clerk.³⁵⁴

When Gale was questioned about the reliability and accuracy of the Japanese official figures, he answered that:

I know that while I was Adjutant of Tamuang Camp, I had to produce figures regularly to check against Japanese figures of the total group strength accounting for all persons of No.4 Group throughout the whole area of Siam and that such figures agreed very closely indeed. There had never been a difference of more than 2 or 3 persons except in regard to cases where movements from one camp to another had taken place, and official notification had not yet come in. This, however, was in 1945 and earlier the actual Japanese clerks had admitted that they did not know the exact position, but they had it fairly accurately.³⁵⁵

Gale's testimony can be endorsed by the figures from both sides. The table below shows the figures up to 31 May 1944 that Gale gave to the court, excluding F and H Forces:³⁵⁶

Table.3: POWs' total strength and deaths up to 31 May 1944.

Nationality	Total Strength	Deaths
British	24,012	3,534
Australians	8,521	1,349
Dutch	17,399	2,616
Americans	569	127
Total	50,501	7,626

The figures of 50,501 total strength and 7,626 deaths are close to what the Japanese recorded. The combination of some records up to May 1944, kept by the

³⁵⁴ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.50.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p.51.

³⁵⁶ Ibid. Gale testified the total strength as 50,511, but it is miscalculated by 10.

Thai POW Camp, gives the figures of 50,655 total strength and 7,572 deaths, besides F and H Forces.³⁵⁷

There is another report compiled by an Allied officer, Captain Pusey. In his report, figures up to 30 April 1944, excluding F and H Forces, are as follows:³⁵⁸

Table.4: POWs' total strength and deaths up to 30 April 1944.

Nationality	Total Strength	Deaths
British	23,871	3,383
Australians	8,458	1,285
Dutch	17,391	2,490
Americans	568	127
Total	50,288	7,285

One month difference taken into account, there is no significant disparity among the figures provided by the IJA, Pusey, and Gale. Thus, Gale's words are reliable that the Japanese figures were close to those of the Allied POW authorities.

The only problem is that the Japanese record from September 1944 to August 1945 has not been found. Presumably, the absence of the record in the Thai POW Camp Administration could be attributed to the completion of the railway construction, the restructuring of the POW Camp Administration, and the transfer of POWs to outside Thailand. Besides, on 7 September 1944, the Japanese ship *Rakuyo Maru*, transporting 1,300 POWs from Singapore to Japan, was torpedoed by the US submarine, of whom 1,150 died, and 150 were saved by the Americans. Since these POWs had stayed in Thailand before the transfer, their deaths were treated as the deaths on the railway by the Allied authorities. However, the Thai POW Camp did not count those deaths as such. Thus, the 1,150 deaths taken into account, the IJA's record of 11,234 POWs' deaths up to the end of August 1944 had no significant difference from the Allied authorities' record – 13,000.

³⁵⁷ JACAR, Ref.C14060512200, op. cit., Table 'Numbers of death'.

³⁵⁸ TNA PRO WO361/2237, Captain Pusey's report, 'Prisoners of War, Far East: Thailand-Burma Railway Camps; Report of Graves and Deaths', p.1.

The approximation of the figures was secured by the card index system that was shared by both parties. In the court, after giving the death toll, Gale testified that:

These deaths were only those that had been officially reported to the Japanese HQ up to 31 May, and there might have been a few more as reports were often very late in coming in.³⁵⁹

Gale's testimony indicates that the British and the Japanese shared the information. Here, the card index system made it possible for the POW authorities to share and check the Japanese records. Even after the war, Captain Pusey looked into the card index of the POWs in Thailand and stated in his report that:³⁶⁰

At Ex-POW. HQ. Bangkok all available records were checked, and a card index made giving where possible, the following information for each dead man:

Number

Rank

Name

Unit

Date of Death

Cause of Death

Place buried

Grave Number.

The Australian and Dutch sections were dealt with by their own officers.

From the British card index, an alphabetical nominal roll was compiled. This, when completed, compiled approximately 4750 complied names. [...]

³⁵⁹ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.51.

³⁶⁰ TNA PRO WO361/2237, Captain Pusey's report.

The shared system between the Japanese and the Allied POW authorities helped both sides collect information. Significantly, the Japanese needed such records not only for their own use but also to meet international obligations. During the war, the Japanese Government submitted to the International Red Cross the reports on the Allied POWs in their hands, which were compiled based on the card index system. It is a little-known fact that since 15 October 1943, the Japanese Government periodically sent the International Red Cross the lists of Allied POWs: the Thai POW Camp's list consisted of more than 500 pages.³⁶¹

Local Labourers

The numbers of local labourers are more complicated than those of POWs for various reasons. One reason is that sources are unclear. In fact, even the Japanese had some difficulties in grasping the actual state of the employed local labourers, whom local governmental agencies or brokers had recruited. In Burma, the recruitment was conducted by Ba Maw's government and local leaders,³⁶² and in Thailand and Malaya by local agents or brokers.³⁶³ The recruitment processes were intricate as they involved negotiations between the local authorities or agents and the IJA. Besides, unlike the Allied POWs, labourers could move quite freely and often deserted from the construction sites. Furthermore, labourers' wives and children, who were allowed to live with the labourers, made statistics more

³⁶¹ JACAR, Ref.B02032587700. Documents relating to Greater East Asia War/ Treatment of nationals of enemy countries and POWs between belligerent countries/ Nationals of enemy countries within Empire/ List of POW (copy of list addressed to Red Cross from POW Information Bureau), Vol.1(A-7-0-0-9_11_2_5_001) (Diplomatic Archives of the MOFA), 12.Prison Camp in Thailand.

³⁶² U. Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 1968), p.294; Line Yone Thit Lwin, *Shi no Tetsuro: Taimen Tetsudo Birumajin Romusha no Kiroku (Death Railroad: The Record of a Burmese Labourer on the Burma-Thailand Railway)* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1981), pp.1-19; Hiroike, pp-243-248; Ishida, pp.108-110; Asai, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo Hoi', p27-28.

³⁶³ Hiroike, pp-243-248; Yoshikawa, pp.193-220; Ishida, pp.108-110.

complicated. In the following sections, the actual figures of the local labourers on the railway will be ascertained.

Labourers and Thailand

Most labourers who worked on the Thai side were from British Malaya. The Brett report states that the Malay labourers were, for the most part, recruited on a voluntary basis through the labour agencies, and approximately 75,000 were recruited between March 1943 and March 1944; 7,500 Javanese and 5,000 Chinese labourers were recruited in early 1944.³⁶⁴ Although the Chinese labourers were recruited in Thailand, the Brett report does not mention Thais on the record. It seems a little strange that the Japanese did not employ Thai labourers for the construction in Thailand. In fact, Thai labourers initially worked for the railway. Strictly speaking, the work was not 'on the railway' but 'around the railway'. Moreover, the Thai labourers ceased to work before the construction became full-fledged. Beaumont and Witcomb explain the reason as follows:

The latter practice [work] ceased when tension arose between the Japanese military and the Thai workers, thanks to the arrogance of the Japanese, their requisitioning of temples and their discourtesy to priests. But the Thai Government then pressured the local Chinese to make up the shortfall of workers, of the 5,200 Chinese – Thais provided between December 1943 and February 1945, 500 died.³⁶⁵

However, this brief explanation is not sufficient to understand what was going on behind the scenes. Beaumont and Witcomb's view that Thai labourers ceased to work when tension arose between the Thais and the IJA due to the arrogance of

³⁶⁴ SEATIC Brett Report, op. cit., 'Army Railway Regiments in Japan, Burma and Thailand', p.6.

³⁶⁵ Joan Beaumont and Andrea Witcomb, 'The Thai-Burma Railway: Asymmetrical and Transnational Memories', in Twomey and Koh (eds.) *The Pacific War: Aftermaths, Remembrance and Culture*, (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p.77.

the Japanese and their discourtesy to priests, apparently refers to the Ban Pong Incident.

On 18 December 1942, in Ban Pong, a Japanese soldier struck a novice monk, who came from Nakhon Pathom, on the face three times, when the soldier saw the monk give a POW cigarettes on the street. Later, the monk and twenty others went to the IJA's office to protest. In the evening of that day, some Japanese soldiers came to the temple where the monk was staying, and a scuffle broke out between the Thais and the Japanese. Although the scuffle was once stopped by the head of the local police and the IJA battalion commander, eventually it escalated into a gun battle, in which several died on both sides. The incident became a diplomatic issue between the two countries. While having demanded compensation from the Thais for the Japanese dead, the Japanese found a point of concession and donated the money, 80,000 baht, to the Thais who had lost families during the war.³⁶⁶

Indeed, due to the incident, tension arose between the Japanese and the Thais, and thus fewer Thai labourers became willing to work under the IJA. However, Thai and Japanese sources reveal that the situation was not so simple as it seems. Because of Thais' avoidance to work under the IJA, the mayor of Ban Pong requested help from the Thai authorities, which decided to lend 70 labourers to the IJA in that the cooperation with the Japanese was indispensable to carry out the war.³⁶⁷

Notably, it was the Thai Railway Bureau that first employed local Thai labourers for the railway construction. On 16 September 1942, the official agreement was made between the Thai Government and the IJA to cooperate for the railway construction. On 27 September, the Thai Railway Bureau started the roadbed construction between Ban Pong and Kanchanaburi, which the Thais insisted on building for themselves. Thus, on 29 September, the mayor of Ban Pong began to employ local labourers. Besides, Thai documents indicate that 5,167 Thai labourers arrived in Ban Pong between 29 September and 11 October: 353 from Ratchaburi (29 September); 837 from Phetchaburi (30 September); 990

³⁶⁶ Yoshikawa, pp.93-99.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p.91.

from Nakhon Pathom (30 September); 2,987 from Suphanburi (11 October).³⁶⁸

With the Thai authorities' mediation, the IJA's Railway Corps could employ Thai labourers to construct the new station of Non-Pladuk and the base of the railway construction there. According to the Thai documents, with the mediation of Kanchanaburi's governor, the IJA employed 691 Thai labourers between 7 October and 5 November 1942. Here, an ordinary labourer was paid 80 satang a day, and a group leader was paid 1 baht 25 satang, which was the same pay as was given under the Thai Railway Bureau. This record indicates that the vast majority of the Thai labourers were working for the Thai Railway Bureau even before the Ban Pong Incident. Thus, too much emphasis on the impact of the Incident on the Thai labourers' avoidance of working under the IJA could obscure their own objective in the construction.

In fact, both Thai and Japanese sources indicate that the Thai labourers were thought not to be reliable from the beginning. The Japanese records often described the Thai labourers as indolent,³⁶⁹ and this view was shared by the Thai authorities. In the Thai archives, Yoshikawa found a letter written by the Thai Railway Bureau requesting local Thai leaders to improve the indolence, the inefficiency, and the lack of punctuality and discipline of the Thai labourers, who could be disgraceful in front of the foreigners.³⁷⁰

Furthermore, it was well known among the Japanese that the Thai labourers would always desert after the Japanese had paid them allowances and expenses in advance. The No.2 POW Camp's official record states that once the Thais received their contract money, most of them would disappear from stations.³⁷¹ Also, Commander Ishida of the Railway Corps states that:

The labourers were recruited mainly from Thailand, Malaya and Burma. They received a departing allowance and travel expenses in advance through their group leaders when signing their contracts. However, almost all Thais

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.90.

³⁶⁹ No.2 Camp's record quoted in Hiroike, p.244; Ishida, p.109.

³⁷⁰ Yoshikawa, p.90.

³⁷¹ No.2 Camp's record quoted in Hiroike, pp.244.

and not a few Burmese deserted and re-applied for the same job twice or three times to receive allowances again. Some Malays and Indians deserted after arriving at their construction sites, and the Japanese often found them working in the nearby construction site of the Kura Railway, where they had come somehow without the knowledge of the Railway Corps.³⁷²

According to Ishida, the group leaders of Thai labourers could not control their men at all, which fostered desertions. Moreover, the Thais knew their way around the region, which made their desertions easier.³⁷³ Thus, the view that the tension between the Thais and the Japanese due to the Ban Pong Incident resulted in the Thais' cessation of the work on the railway is a little too simplified.

As only a small number of Thai labourers worked for the railway construction, the IJA needed to recruit non-Thai labourers with high wages. According to Hiroike, the labourers normally received 80 yen a month with meals. The salary was equal to that of the IJA's second lieutenants.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, as the IJA asked local agents to recruit labourers inside and outside Thailand, the cost came high. Notably, a Chinese civilian organisation called the Chinese Association for Commerce in Bangkok obtained an exceptional deal: the Chinese labourers were paid 150 yen per month with meals.³⁷⁵ Nevertheless, how much commission such labourers had to pay to the Association was unknown.

The general recruitment of labourers for the railway construction began in March 1943 when the construction came into the so-called 'speedo' rush-work period. In the process of recruitment, negotiations were repeated. Yoshikawa found official Thai documents regarding the recruitment of labourers in Thailand. On 2 March 1943, the Japanese attaché in Bangkok sent an official letter to the head of the Thai-Japanese Governmental Liaison Office and requested 13,000 labourers in Thailand.³⁷⁶ On 13 March, a Thai-Japanese joint conference was held

³⁷² Ishida, p.98.

³⁷³ Ibid., p.109.

³⁷⁴ Hiroike, p.237.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p.238.

³⁷⁶ Yoshikawa, pp196-9. Thai document [Bok.Sungsut.2.4.1.2/12].

to talk about the recruitment, in which labour conditions were agreed as follows: the daily wage was two baht or more; the contract period was six months; in the case the recruitment of Thai labourers was difficult, foreigners such as Chinese would be employed. On 31 March, the Japanese requested that the recruitment be done by 10 April and offered a condition to pay a labourer two baht for the daily wage plus a baht for the travel expense. Also, the Japanese asked the Thais whether they could recruit 2,000 skilled workers by the end of April. However, the Thais' answer was negative. Then, the Japanese asked the Thais to mediate between the Japanese and the Chinese Association for Commerce in Thailand.³⁷⁷ On 5 April 1943, in the conference, the Thais informed the Japanese of the conditions that the Chinese Association had offered. Negotiations continued between the Chinese and the Japanese with the mediation of the Thai-Japanese Alliance Liaison Office (Krom prasanngan phanthamit), and at last, the conclusion was made as follows:³⁷⁸

A daily wage for an earth worker – 3 baht

A daily wage for a leader of a group of 25 labourers – 4 baht

A daily wage for a leader of a group of 100 labourers – 5 baht

A daily wage for a leader of a group of 500 labourers – 8 baht

1 baht will be added when it rains.

On 22 April, the Thai Police issued Kanchanaburi Prefecture permission allowing 13,000 foreign labourers to enter the prefecture.³⁷⁹ The dispatch of 11,577 Chinese labourers was carried out from 17 April to 26 May 1943, confirmed by the Thai Interior Minister, who sent the confirmation letter to the Liaison Office on 12 June 1943.³⁸⁰

On 28 May 1943, in the Thai-Japanese joint conference, the Japanese requested additional 20,000 labourers. However, the Thais' reply was negative. In

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p.199.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.202-3.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p.203.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p.204.

June, the Japanese requested again the recruitment of an additional 23,000 labourers to the Liaison Office, which then asked the Chinese Association for Commerce again under the Thai Army Commander's permission. On 14 June, the Thai Interior Ministry had a conference and decided that the Bangkok Governor would talk with the Chinese. As a result, the Thai-Japanese Alliance Liaison Office requested that the Chinese Association should recruit 13,000 Chinese and that the Thai Government should recruit 10,000 Thais. However, as the Chinese Association had little capacity left for the recruitment, the number was reduced to 5,320.³⁸¹

The second dispatch was carried out from 15 July to 31 August 1943. In total, 14,526 labourers were recorded to have been sent to Ban Pong.³⁸² However, the receiver's record indicated 12,968 before arriving in Ban Pong, 11,266 at Ban Pong, and 5,595 at Wanyai.³⁸³ Thus, these figures imply that some 9,000 labourers deserted on the way to the construction sites. By stringing this figure with the Japanese record, it is presumed that almost all Thai labourers deserted, and the Chinese remained for the work. Here, the total number of labourers that the Chinese Association for Commerce provided became 16,000.

The reality of recruiting these labourers in Thailand is far from the general image of forced labour or slave labour. Interestingly, there is a gap between the widely-accepted account and the Thai official records: the latter clearly indicates that the Thais cooperated with the Japanese and were not subjugated at all. However, Beaumont and Witcomb point out that the Thai historiography depicts that the Thais collaborated with the Japanese for a pragmatic reason in the face of the region's realities: the 'devil's choice' enabled the Thais to preserve their sovereignty despite their capitulation. Beaumont and Witcomb explain that:

[I]n this narrative of 'flexible, survivalist diplomacy' the building of the Thai-Burma railway on Thai soil, if it is mentioned at all, becomes an imposition

³⁸¹ Ibid., pp.205-6.

³⁸² Ibid., p.208.

³⁸³ Ibid., p.210.

of the Japanese on the Thais, not an atrocity in which they were complicit.³⁸⁴

Beaumont and Witcomb call the Thai historiography's 'amnesia' facilitated by the fact that in 1944 the Thai Liberal Government replaced Phibun's Government and tried to clear the war guilt in the eyes of the US and its allies.³⁸⁵

Labourers from Malaya

In Malaya and Java, the recruitment was carried out by sub-organisations of the military administration authorities or local municipal governments, making conscripted recruitment possible in some cases. In any case, it was the recruiters' responsibility to bring the labourers to the Ban Pong Station by train, where the IJA paid the labourers allowances for departure and travel expenses. At Ban Pong, once the Railway Corps Command received the labourers, the Corps handed them over to the Materials Depot, the 9th Railway Regiment. The Materials Depot brought them to Wanyai (124km Point) by train and handed them over to each battalion. The battalions sent their soldiers as guides and brought the labourers to their construction sites where their companies or platoons were working. The labourers marched from Wanyai but could usually take one-day rests when they arrived at logistics bases *en route* to their destinations.³⁸⁶

Interestingly, the labourers got on trains from Ban Pong to Wanyai, whereas the POWs had to march there. According to Hiroike, when 2,000 labourers arrived at Ban Pong as the first party in May 1943, they could get on trains on the newly built railway from Ban Pong to Wanyai, where the railway reached in the early May after the problematic points at 103km and 107km were cleared in the middle of April. Hiroike points out that the labourers' transportation made a sharp contrast with that of POWs' F Force, which had to march to Nieke for 300km from Ban Pong in the same month.³⁸⁷ Hiroike provides a reason for the disparity in the treatment. The labourers were not trained to act as a group, and some of them

³⁸⁴ Beaumont and Witcomb, p.77.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Hiroike, p.238.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p.238.

brought their families, whom the Japanese welcomed because the Japanese wanted them to settle down along the railway and do maintenance work after its completion.³⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, the labourers and their families were not able to march such a long way. Moreover, when they arrived at their construction sites, their huts were already built by the railway platoons. The railway soldiers brought foods for them, and there were canteens. Thus, all they had to do was cooking.³⁸⁹ Unlike the POWs, the labourers did not have their administrative organisation, and thus the Railway Corps took care of them. According to Hiroike, 10-20 per cent of the railway soldiers had to work for the labourers' administration, which caused great inconvenience for the construction work.³⁹⁰ Indeed, at that time, the Railway Corps soldiers were extremely busy with the construction work in the rush-work period between March and August 1943.

When the Japanese began in earnest to employ local labourers in March 1943, 2,000 labourers had already been working for the Japanese in Thailand and Burma. Hiroike recollects that 2,000 labourers were working for light labour around logistic bases such as Ban Pong, Kanchanaburi and Thanbyuzayat as of when he left the Command in March 1943. Hiroike well remembered the figure of 2,000 labourers because he was dissatisfied with it. According to Hiroike, the Railway Corps requested in mid-January 1943 that the IHQ should decide to recruit 80,000 labourers from February in that 40,000 could be on duty per day. However, the recruitment barely began in March, and the labourers' number began to increase in earnest in May and, at last, reached 80,000 at the construction's final stage. Hiroike calculates that from 16 January to 25 October 1943, the average number of labourers on duty was 16,050 per day.³⁹¹ Therefore, it was not until May 1943 that the Railway Corps Command made rules and regulations regarding the labourers' treatment based on the SAC's labour conditions. Hiroike explains that the IHQ did not issue any rules and regulations regarding the labourers who did not have the same legal status as the POWs, but that such a state caused no

³⁸⁸ Ibid., p.240.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p.241.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p.242.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p.236.

problem until May 1943 as the primary workforce had been the POWs.³⁹²

According to the Brett report, the movement of 70,000 labourers from Malaya began in April 1943 and completed in September. Furthermore, the supply of 1,000 Malay Railway employees started in August 1943 and ended in July 1944. These records roughly correspond to Hiroike's statement. Notably, although the Brett report provides the numbers of labourers in detail, including those recruited from Malaya, Java, Thailand and French Indo-China, the figures originally come from the IJA's records – the Labour Department HQ, 4th Special Railway Unit.³⁹³

Here, it should be noted that a Japanese post-war report on the labourer issue shows some discrepancies. On 30 October 1963, Tadao Inoue, the Advisor to the Justice Minister, submitted a report on the local labourers employed for the railway construction, based on documents and hearings from those involved in the labourers' recruitment. The Inoue report states that in July 1943, the IJA requested that the military administration in Malaya send 100,000 labourers to the construction sites.³⁹⁴ Many locals whom Japanese companies in Malaya had employed were to be hired for the railway construction. Nevertheless, it seems a little strange that the IJA requested the reinforcement of 100,000 labourers in July 1943 because the dispatch of 70,000 labourers was still in process, and thus the transport capacity must have been limited. Indeed, the movement of 70,000, taking six months, completed in September 1943. Even Inoue concluded that it was unrealistic that 100,000 labourers were all sent and worked on the railway by the railway completion in October 1943.³⁹⁵

The Brett report shows that, after the completion, extra 14,000 Malay labourers were sent between December 1943 and August 1945, and additional 5,000 Chinese were employed in Thailand between December 1943 and February 1945.³⁹⁶ Presumably, the IJA requested the military administration in Malaya to

³⁹² Ibid., p.237.

³⁹³ SEATIC Brett report, op. cit., p.25.

³⁹⁴ Tadao Inoue, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo Kensetsu Ni Shiyoushita Genchijin Romusha No Joukyou (Report on Local Labourers Employed for the Burma-Thailand Railway Construction)', 1963, Military Archives, NIDS, p1,861.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ SEATIC Brett report, op. cit. p.25.

supply labourers to make the total up to 100,000, meaning 20,000 reinforcement was needed. This surge request in July 1943 might have resulted from the unsatisfactory recruitment in Thailand in June.

At any rate, the Brett report takes the view that 91,112 labourers were employed from April 1943 to August 1945 to work for the railway on Thai soil. Therefore, with the 2,000 labourers having already existed before March 1943, the total number of labourers working in Thailand was approximately 93,000. Regarding the labourers' death toll in Thailand, Hiroike estimates that approximately 23,600 labourers died, and 9,400 deserted from the construction sites: in total, 33,000 labourers were lost.³⁹⁷ The figure of 33,000 deaths corresponds to the Brett report stating that 33,076 died on the railway, although the data originally came from the IJA's 4th Special Railway Unit. Notably, the desertion made it difficult to collect accurate data, and thus the deserters were counted as dead. Besides, the labourers' relatively free movement and wilful repatriation also made it difficult to grasp an accurate death toll. In other words, how many labourers deserted or repatriated is unknown. Brett states in his report that there were 24,111 Tamils, Chinese Malays and Javanese were registered, awaiting repatriation in October and November 1945, but that how many had proceeded to their homes before the registration began was unknown.³⁹⁸

Therefore, regarding the labourers' figures, the fragmentation of records is a significant obstacle for researchers. Nevertheless, the view that, in total, 90-100,000 labourers worked on the railway in Thailand seems to be reasonable. Notably, Commander Ishida states that labourers who had been sent from Malaya were 90,000 in total, including those who deserted on the way to the construction sites or returned home in the middle of work.³⁹⁹ Moreover, it can be concluded that approximately 33,000 labourers died on the railway in Thailand, although the figure actually includes deaths, missing and desertions.

Burmese labourers

³⁹⁷ Hiroike, p.357.

³⁹⁸ SEATIC Brett report, op. cit., p.18.

³⁹⁹ Ishida, p.110.

In Burma, the Ba Maw government cooperated with the IJA and formed a volunteer/conscripted labour service group. The Burmese named it 'the Sweat Army', implying that they were fighting against British colonial rule. In Thailand and Malaya, labourers were recruited by contract in cooperation with the local authorities and agents, whereas in Burma, the Ba Maw government proactively recruited labourers. Nevertheless, since the Burmese had no means to transport them from all over the country, the IJA's No.5 Special Railway Unit took charge of transporting them to Thanbyuzayat by train with meals during the journey.

At Thanbyuzayat, the 5th Railway Regiment received the labourers. The regimental materials depot first quarantined them and organised units with the cooperation of Burmese officials. Then, the Japanese brought the Burmese with translators to the construction sites of their allocated battalions.⁴⁰⁰

As such, Burmese labourers were not officially labourers under a contract; the Japanese paid them pro forma rewards for the cooperation, not as wages for the labour. According to Hiroike, the Japanese paid 45 yen per month to a Burmese labourer.⁴⁰¹ The amount was much more substantial than that of prevailing wages in Burma at the time, which is described in a diary written by Fukuji Kuwano, a Japanese civilian who worked for the military administration in Burma. In the entry dated 19 August 1942, Kuwano states that Burmese local salt sellers, who paid 8 Annas to an employee, complained that they could now use fewer workers as the Railway Corps paid a labourer 12 Annas.⁴⁰² In short, the railway labourers received fifty per cent more than the standard wage in Burma. Notably, the Burmese labourers whom Kuwano saw working along with POWs were recruited before the Ba Maw government established its official organisation for the recruitment. Presumably, the Japanese directly employed the labourers on a small scale at that time.

The Japanese found that the in general Burmese labourers worked hard with three-month shifts. However, desertions gradually increased in number both *en*

⁴⁰⁰ Hiroike, p.238.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p.237.

⁴⁰² Fukuji Kuwano, *Aru Shoshain to Daitoa Senso (A Trading Company Staff and the Greater East Asia War)* (Tokyo: Oshisha, 1988), p.152.

route to and from the construction sites.⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, an IJA record states that the number of desertions decreased after completing the construction road, through which sufficient goods and food could be supplied to remote areas, and returning home for furlough became ensured.⁴⁰⁴

Since in Burma the recruitment of labourers was carried out by Ba Maw's Government, it is worth examining the Burmese viewpoint. In his memoirs, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946*, Ba Maw describes how and why the Burmese collaborated with the Japanese on the railway construction. According to Ba Maw, in late 1942, Commander Sasaki of the 5th Railway Regiment proposed to build a railway linking Burma and Thailand with his 'intense faith in a more dynamic concept of Asian unity'.⁴⁰⁵ Ba Maw states his feelings after the talk with Sasaki as follows:

His words gave me a glimpse of the Asian future we were fighting for. More than that, the railway would wipe out a past deep historical wrong, for these two countries had been kept isolated from each other by the European imperialist powers in the region as one way of preserving their spheres of interest.⁴⁰⁶

Thus, all the government members agreed to join the project and supply labourers for it. Nevertheless, Ba Maw admits that, at that time, they did not think much of the enormous difficulties they would face in the wild and pestilential jungles, where the Allied forces would continually bomb from the air.⁴⁰⁷ However, Ba Maw and his fellows regarded such labourers as a part of their forces fighting against the British colonial rule rather than ordinary workers. Thus, Thakin Ba Sein, taking charge of recruiting, organising, transporting and settling the labourers,

⁴⁰³ Ishida, p.109.

⁴⁰⁴ Hiroike, p.244.

⁴⁰⁵ Ba Maw, p.290.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.290-291

named the labourers' cohort *Chwetat*, or the 'Sweat Army', which was intended to be juxtaposed with the regular army, *Thwe-tat*, or the 'Blood Army'.⁴⁰⁸

Ba Maw recalls that Sasaki requested 26,000 labourers for the first year. Ba Maw agreed to supply as many labourers as possible and, in return, required the Japanese to meet conditions as follows: 1) the families are allowed to join the labourers after a certain period; 2) the labourers are to be paid their wages and travel allowances in advance.; 3) the labourers are to be provided with all essential commodities. Sasaki readily accepted the conditions, and the Burmese, establishing the Labour Bureau, took necessary measures to implement the plan. Here, a Burmese political organisation called *Dobama Sinyetha Asiayone* played an active role in the labourers' recruitment and the inspection of the labour conditions. Notably, the Burmese organised permanent inspectors and periodical inspection teams, consisting of senior Burmese officials, including ministers, who visited both construction and recruitment sites to report the conditions. Thus, at the end of 1942, Deputy Prime Minister Thakin Mya inspected the construction site at Thanbyuzayat and reported that 10,000 labourers of the 'Sweat Army' were working under proper conditions.⁴⁰⁹

Thus, the cooperation of the Burmese and the Japanese started smoothly. Ba Maw recollects that on 11 January 1943, a banquet was held to celebrate the success of the project's initial stage, and the Burmese paid a high tribute to Sasaki and his regiment. Then, Thakin Mya made a speech praising Sasaki as a 'great, good, and generous man' who was "breaking down an age-old barrier dividing two Asian peoples".⁴¹⁰ Nevertheless, Ba Maw also states that more than half of the labourers disappeared by either fleeing or dying from diseases by the end of the first stage.⁴¹¹ Eventually, in total, 65,000 labourers were sent to the construction sites, and at least half of them actually worked on the railway.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p.291.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p.292.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid., p.293.

Nevertheless, these figures that Ba Maw provided are different from those in other sources. The Inoue report states that the first recruitment began in mid-December 1942, and 13,950 applied for the job by the end of February 1943.⁴¹³ On 3 March 1943, the head of the Japanese Military Administration held a meeting with the Burmese delegation, which Ba Maw joined. At the meeting, further recruitment of Burmese labourers was agreed. As a result, 32,184 were recruited between late March and early April; 17,615 between mid-May and early June; and 21,985 in late July 1943. Thus, in total, 85,738 Burmese labourers were recruited for the railway construction.⁴¹⁴ Notably, the Japanese requested that at least 20,000 labourers should be at work all the time, which meant that 30,000 had to be kept all the time.⁴¹⁵

These figures correspond to those provided by Tsunezo Ota, a well-known Japanese scholar of the Japanese military administration in wartime Burma. In his work, Ota states that in mid-December 1942, the Railway Regiment Commander requested Ba Maw's Government to provide labourers for the construction, and Ba Maw immediately formed the Committee for the Recruitment and Welfare of Labourers and carried out the recruitment up to the end of February 1943. As a result, 13,950 labourers were recruited, which was only half of the target.⁴¹⁶ Thus, the IJA suggested the new recruitment system from all over Burma, which was the formation of the Labour Service Corps. On 1 March 1943, the Railway Corps representatives, the Military Administration authorities, and the Ba Maw government gathered at the 15th Army's Command to have talks regarding the formation of the Labour Service Corps.⁴¹⁷ Ba Maw himself attended the conference. On 2 March 1943, the 15th Army Commander issued the essentials regarding the organisation and dispatch of Labour Service Corps for the railway

⁴¹³ Inoue Report, p.1,858.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p.1,859.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p.1,860.

⁴¹⁶ Tsunezo Ota, *Biruma ni Okeru Nihon Gunseishi no Kenkyu (History of Japanese Military Administration in Burma)* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1967). p.242.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p.243-44.

construction.⁴¹⁸

The essentials included directions about the welfare of the members. For instance, it stipulated that the members be vaccinated against smallpox, cholera and the plague without fail. Also, it was directed that the members of the Labour Service Corps must not be dealt as ordinary labourers; the use of the word 'coolie' was strictly prohibited; their workplaces must be distinguished from those of ordinary labourers; the working hours must be appropriate, and excessive labour must not be allowed. Regarding the working conditions, the essentials stipulated that the period of duty was from April to July; a two-month respite was allowed if municipal governments could provide substitutes; the members should receive salary and allowances; their families receive security money.⁴¹⁹

Notably, Ba Maw took charge of the recruitment and established the Committee for the Recruitment of Labour Service Corps for the Railway Construction, which decided that the Corps would consist of 30,000 members. On 5 March 1943, the first committee meeting decided that prefectural governors be responsible for local recruitment quotas. Consequently, the governors pressed mayors and officials in their prefectures. Besides, Ba Maw's *Sinyetha* Party cooperated in the recruitment campaign, and the Committee sent its members and other administration officials to promote the campaign. The Japanese Military Administration authorities provided 210,000 Rupee for the recruitment, in short, 7 Rupee per person. The salary of the Corps members was decided based on the Ba Maw government's requirement. On 9 March 1943, the President of the Committee informed the governors of the salary standards, and then the recruitment commenced. Eventually, 32,184 were recruited.⁴²⁰

However, many withdrawals and desertions necessitated the second recruitment campaign as 30,000 labourers had to be maintained all the time. Ba Maw decided that 21,000 should be recruited and talked with the Japanese on 6 May 1943. The result of the recruitment was 17,615.⁴²¹ Again, additional 20,000

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p.244.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p.520.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p.244.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p.245.

recruitments were decided in early July because of a request from the Japanese, who were concerned that during the rainy season, the spread of diseases and the increase of desertions would make the workforce short. The result of the third recruitment campaign was 21,069.⁴²² Thus, 70,868 Labour Service Corps members were recruited between March and July 1943, although the figure includes withdrawals and desertions. Including 13,950 labourers recruited by February 1943, the total strength reached 84,818. These figures are provided by Ota.

Nevertheless, another Japanese record indicates that the total number of Burmese labourers was 91,384,⁴²³ which is 6,500 larger than those figures provided by Inoue and Ota. It is probably because the Railway Corps handed over its labour administration and records to the Burmese officials at the end of July 1943 in order to concentrate on the construction.⁴²⁴ Additional labourers might have been requited without the Japanese knowing it.

Here, a significant gap emerges as the Brett report estimates that 178,800 labourers were employed in Burma. The figure is twice as large as those the Japanese provided. Notably, the figure in the Brett report was based on the records supplied by U Aung Min, former Deputy Director of Labour in the Japanese-sponsored Burmese Government.⁴²⁵ According to U Aung Min's records, the Sweat Army recruited 87,000 labourers between July 1942 and January 1943 on a voluntary basis. The Labour Service Corps conscripted 91,800 between March 1943 and August 1944.⁴²⁶ Thus, Brett concluded that 178,836 labourers were recruited in Burma, and 40,000 died, noting U Aung Min's data as 'Approximate only'. Furthermore, in the footnote, Brett states that some authorities estimate the death toll as high as 60,000.⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, no source of the figure is shown. Where did those death toll figures come from?

⁴²² Ibid., p.245-6.

⁴²³ TNA PRO WO325/56, 'Burma-Siam Railway: Report on Coolie Camp Conditions, Nov 1943-Aug 1945', p.75.

⁴²⁴ Ota, p.246.

⁴²⁵ SEATIC Brett report, op. cit., p.25.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p.17.

Lin Yone Thit Lwin, who worked as a group leader of Burmese labourers, provides a figure close to that of U Aung Min. Lin Yone states in the preface of his memoirs that the Japanese recruited 17,7000 labourers from all over Burma. Also, Lin Yone states that the Japanese informed the Allied Forces Cemetery Committee that: 130,000 were recruited; 40,000 of them ran away on the way to the construction sites, and 13,500 returned home after the construction. Thus, the Committee estimated that 30-80,000 Burmese labourers died. Line Yone added that on 7 August 1947, the British Foreign Office had stated that it was estimated that 80,000 Burmese labourers were dead.⁴²⁸ Lin Yone mentions that he cited a booklet entitled “The Burma-Siam Railway 1942-1945” for those figures.⁴²⁹ Presumably, the booklet was an Allied report compiled after the war, in which U Aung Min’s figures might have been cited. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find and verify the booklet because the author is unknown.

Besides, these estimations of the Burmese death toll in the construction are difficult to verify because of the lack of accurate records on desertions and repatriations. Notably, the Brett report states that, as of October 1945, approximately 6,000 Burmese remained at various points along the railway mostly because of their sickness, but other Burmese had already proceeded to their homes independently, the record of whom was not kept.⁴³⁰

What caused such a large gap between the Burmese records and the Japanese ones? Here, Ba Maw's recollection could provide a clue, although the Allied investigators disregarded his point for some reason. Regarding the labourers' recruitment, Ba Maw states that:

That was cruel enough, but the way it was done to a large number of them was so foul that it became one of the most abominable crimes on the people during the war. The worst of it was that the principal criminals were some of the Burmese themselves. The central Government had enforced a system which gave the whole power of recruitment to the local Burmese

⁴²⁸ Line Yone, p.2.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p.3.

⁴³⁰ SEATIC Brett report, op. cit., p.18.

administration, while the Japanese labour officers would merely stand by, fix the number of labourers needed, help when asked, and take them to their destination.

Out of this system, which was really intended to protect the Burmese, there grew a colossal racket, particularly in areas remote from central control. Thus a Japanese officer would ask for a certain number of labourers from a locality. If the local Burmese officer who received the request happened to be corrupt, he would make up a list for each town and village under him, taking care to enter into it all his enemies and also some of the wealthiest inhabitants, who could be squeezed to pay the largest bribes. The list would contain more people than the required number in order to give a wider range for blackmail. [...] If as a result the total number of labourers needed was not obtained the bums and tramps in town would be rounded up, appeased with a small payment, and packed off with secret instructions to take the first chance to run away before reaching the construction camp. One labour officer told me that three-quarters of the recruits did not arrive at the camp.⁴³¹

In short, the figures provided by the Burmese were padded out by corrupt Burmese officials, who had instructed the labourers to desert. This corruption must have been a significant factor that caused confusion and discrepancy between the Burmese and Japanese regarding the number of labourers recruited.

Also, U Hla Pe⁴³², a Burmese language linguist, who worked for the BBC Burmese from 1942 to 1946 and thus took an anti-Japanese position, points out the corruption of the Burmese: in the recruitment of labourers, village headmen could be bribed to leave out certain people from the lists; and anyone who volunteered to fulfil the village quota was paid a bonus of two to three hundred rupees each time from the wealthy villagers, who were supposed to join the labour party. Then, the headmen received a kickback from the labourers.⁴³³

⁴³¹ Ba Maw, p.294.

⁴³² U. Hla Pe obtained his doctoral degree at the University of London in 1944.

⁴³³ U. Hla Pe, *Narrative of the Japanese Occupation of Burma* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University,

These accounts of the Burmese correspond to that of Tokuichi Asai, who was the Acting Chief of Labourer Section in the IJA's Military Administration in Burma from mid-June to early August 1943. According to Asai, rascals and vagrants in a village applied for the job and received parting gifts from villagers, but they ran away as early as possible to apply for the subsequent recruitment. Having heard of the trick, Asai took necessary measures such as making blacklists.⁴³⁴ When Asai worked as a civilian official to recruit labourers at Brom and Tarawaji, Southern Burma, his office received labourer quotas from the Military Administration authorities at Rangoon. His office sent the request to the governors of Brom and Tarawaji, who then informed mayors and county heads of the Japanese request. Then, the mayors and the county heads sent their quotas to headmen of villages and towns. As the number of desertions was quite large, Asai's office usually requested twice as many labourers as actual quotas. However, on one occasion, his office sent three hundred men by train to Moulmein, where only four arrived.⁴³⁵ Thus, the inflation of quotas and the multitude of desertions were related to each other.

Here, the IJA's *inzu-shugi* might have become a breeding ground for corruption because the Japanese did not check who the labourers were and how they were recruited as long as the number was met. Ba Maw observed that:

All that most of the Japanese labour officers bothered about was to get the right number of workers; they did not care how it was done, particularly when the Burmese themselves were doing it.⁴³⁶

Also, Lin Yone observed that the Japanese always gave priority to meeting the number of labourers and requested local officials to do so.⁴³⁷ Accordingly, the Burmese officials forced bums and vagrants in towns to become labourers,

1961), p.18.

⁴³⁴ Asai, 'Tai-Men Tetsudo Hoi', pp27-28; Inoue Report, p1,863.

⁴³⁵ Asai, op. cit.

⁴³⁶ Ba Maw, p.295.

⁴³⁷ Lin Yone, p.55.

invoking Articles 109 and 110 of the Panel Code that had been introduced by the British.⁴³⁸ Moreover, among the labourers, there were various people, such as retard, mute, and deaf.⁴³⁹

These statements of Lin Yone, Ba Maw, Hla Pe, and Asai have something in common regarding the reality of the Burmese labourers' recruitment and officials' corruption. Nevertheless, Hla Pe basically had quite a different view from Ba Maw and the Japanese on the Burmese labourers. Although not in Burma during the railway construction, Hla Pe argued that "The Sweat Army, one of the biggest racket of the Japanese interlude in Burma, is an equivalent of the slave labour of Nazi Germany."⁴⁴⁰ Hla Pe explains that the Burmese Government and the Japanese started talks for the recruitment of 30,000 labourers from all over Burma, but that the Japanese had already started the recruitment in Moulmein and Thaton Districts before the talks ended: the Japanese created a *fait accompli* and continued the direct recruitment even after the negotiations were concluded. Moreover, Hla Pe adds that: "The local Japanese methods of recruitment was conscription of the most brutal type."⁴⁴¹; there were cases in which labourers were forcibly dragged from their homes or kidnapped by the Japanese; Burmese labour officers were not allowed to visit camps.⁴⁴²

Here, a question arises as to what made Ba Maw and Hla Pe's accounts so different. It is probably because their standpoints were utterly opposite: Ba Maw took the Japanese side; on the other hand, Hla Pe had a solid tie to the British. Significantly, Hla Pe's career at the BBC might have influenced his view through media coverage. In short, the British colonial rule created among the Burmese both the anti-British/independence movement and the pro-British/anti-Japanese establishment. Thus, regarding the Burmese labourers' issue, the conflicting accounts seem to have reflected the British colonial rule and the war between the British and the Japanese. The gap implies the complicated position of the

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p.17.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p.23.

⁴⁴⁰ Hla Pe, p.18.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

colonised nation.

Conclusion

There is a considerable gap between the Allied reports and the Japanese records regarding the numbers of POWs and labourers on the railway. It has been thought that the Japanese underestimated the figures on purpose to lighten the gravity of the war crimes. Nevertheless, the same logic could be applied to the Allied forces with a possibility that they could overestimate the figures to charge and convict as many Japanese as possible. Thus, clinical observation is necessary to analyse the cause of the difference. This chapter explored the issue of the statistical records by verifying the figures and their backgrounds carefully.

The IJA had an idiosyncratic practice to prioritise the nominal numbers over the substances. This *inzu-shugi* or the 'counting-numbers principle' made the IJA clerks adhere to keeping records accurate. Thus, the Japanese had a good reason to grasp POWs' figures and their deaths as accurate as possible. Notably, the Japanese adopted the card index system in cooperation with the POWs. The fact that the Japanese Government sent Allied POWs lists to the International Red Cross indicates that the card index system functioned effectively.

In contrast to the POWs' figures, the Japanese failed to grasp accuracy regarding the numbers of local labourers. There are some reasons for the failure. Firstly, the labourers were not POWs: they were free, but not legally protected. The Japanese lacked the proper human resources to administer the labourers, whose number was much larger than that of POWs, whereas the POWs were taken care of by the POW Camp Administration Unit. Moreover, the labourers' recruiters were not the Japanese but local officials or civilian agents. Under such circumstances, many labourers could desert. The problem of desertion beset the Japanese and resulted in great chaos in the statistics.

Notably, in Burma, frauds and bribes became rife in the process of recruitment under Ba Maw's Government. The combination of desertions, frauds, and bribes caused the recruitment figures' inflation to expand their profits. Notably, the IJA could not control the local Burmese. As a result, there is a significant difference in the record between the Burmese and the Japanese.

Regarding the figures of the POWs and the local labourers, it can be concluded that 60,000 POWs worked on the railway and 12-13,000 died; in Thailand, 90-100,000 labourers were recruited, and half of them deserted, 33,000 died, including missing and desertions; in Burma, at least 90,000 were recruited, but actual numbers of total strength and deaths on the railway are unknown. The next chapter will explore what caused so many casualties in the railway construction. Food, exemplifying national cultures, can be crucial in the POWs' hardships on the railway. This cultural issue has been omitted in the existing and wildly-accepted account of the atrocity.

Chapter 4: POWs' health Problem

Introduction

While 12,000 POWs' death has become evident, it is difficult to ascertain their death causes in detail. Indeed, neither the Brett report nor the Japanese official report explains them. The Brett report has an appendix entitled 'Medical Report by Major Tagami, Chief Medical Officer 9 Rly Regt'. In this report, Tagami recalls that some 6,000 of the 35,000 POWs under the 9th Railway Regiment died in Thailand, and 30 per cent of the deaths were attributed to a cholera epidemic.⁴⁴³ Tagami did not mention other causes of death. Although the Japanese official report provides some detailed statistical data about the causes of death, the Thai POW Camp's record is fragmented: the only detailed record attached to the report is one for October 1943.⁴⁴⁴ It was the month when the railway construction completed, and after that, the Thai POW Camp was reorganised. Presumably, there is no detailed record available that covers the overall causes of death on the railway. Thus, the Japanese official history does not go into detail on how the POWs died in the construction, as described below:

The rainy season began in mid-April 1943 and disturbed the supplies. Then, cholera broke out at Nieke, the border area between Thailand and Burma, and became rampant all over the construction sites as the rainy season proceeded. [...] Those who were weakened by the insufficient supplies and overfatigue had already lost their resistance to the disease. At the peak in June 1943, the number of cholera patients was approximately 6,000, and eventually, 4,000 of them died.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Tagami, 'Medical Report by Major Tagami, Chief Medical Officer 9 Rly Regt' in SEATIC Brett report, op. cit., p.61

⁴⁴⁴ JACAR, Ref.C14060512200, op. cit., Attached tables and charts, pp.2111-2.

⁴⁴⁵ NIDS, *Daihon'ei Rikugunbu (The Army Section, Imperial Headquarters)*, (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1973), Vol.7, p.88.

As non-cholera deaths account for 70 per cent of the POWs' deaths, a detailed breakdown of the percentage is essential to delineate the POWs' plight. Here, the Japanese record of October 1943 can be used to estimate the percentages of death causes other than cholera. The summary of the record is as follows:

Table.5: POWs' Diseases except cholera in Thailand, October 1943.⁴⁴⁶

Cause	No. Patients	No. deaths	% death
Malaria	5,426	79	23.0%
Acute enteritis	1,910	43	12.5%
Beriberi	2,510	38	11.0%
Dermatological diseases	7,314	17	4.9%
Dysentery	246	14	4.1%
Other digestive diseases	2,432	138	40.1%

Table.6: POWs' Diseases except cholera in Burma, October 1943.⁴⁴⁷

Cause	No. Patients	No. deaths	% death
Dysentery	818	62	38.3%
Malaria	3,477	24	14.8%
Beriberi	616	21	13.0%
Dermatological diseases	2,941	7	4.3%
Pneumonia	25	4	2.5%
Other digestive diseases	1,866	4	2.5%
Wounds	843	34	21.0%

Table.7: POWs' Diseases & deaths except cholera in Thailand and Burma, Oct. 1943.

Cause	No. deaths	% death
Malaria	103	20.4%
Dysentery	76	15.0%

⁴⁴⁶ JACAR, Ref.C14060512200. op. cit. 'List of POWs' Diseases in Thailand, October 1943, Thai POW Camp', p.2111.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid. 'List of POWs' Diseases in Burma, October 1943, Thai POW Camp', p.2112.

Beriberi	56	11.7%
Acute enteritis	43	8.5%
Other digestive diseases	142	28.1%
Wounds	34	6.7%

Thus, except for cholera, 20 per cent of the POWs died from malaria, 15 per cent from dysentery, 12 per cent from beriberi, and 37 per cent from digestive diseases. Including cholera deaths, the estimated breakdown of the causes of the POWs' deaths becomes as follows:

Cholera – 30%
Malaria – 14%
Dysentery – 11%
Beriberi – 8%
Acute enteritis – 6%
Other digestive diseases – 20%

Notably, digestive diseases accounted for 26 per cent of the causes of death. With dysentery included, the figure reaches 37 per cent, which is more significant than cholera. Indeed, the cholera outbreak had a devastating impact on those working on the railway physically and psychologically, but too much emphasis on cholera is misleading as the Japanese official history mentions only cholera in explaining the causes of the POWs' deaths.

As former staff officers complied the IJA's official history, it is presumably under the influence of the IJA authorities' mentality at the time. The IJA authorities explained that having had little knowledge about the environment in the jungle, they did not expect that the diseases would become so rampant among the POWs there.⁴⁴⁸ In short, having been trained to fight against the Russians, the IJA had little knowledge of the Southern area and underestimated various factors

⁴⁴⁸ See JACAR, Ref.C14060252500-3300(NIDS), 'POW use situation in line with Thai-Burmese railway construction investigation report from June 1942 to October 1943', pp.1679-84; 1694-1706; 1730-32.

contributing to the POWs' health deterioration. Consequently, factors such as insufficient food and medical supplies, insanitation, fatigue and stress weaken the POWs' resistance to the diseases.

At the same time, there was room for the POWs to improve the situation in their camps. The realities of the POW camps and their problems are more openly stated in ex-POWs' memoirs than in the official reports made by the officers after the war. This chapter will delineate how the diseases became prevalent in the POW camps and how the POW doctors and the Japanese coped with the situation.

Malaria

In his memoirs, Stanley P. Pavillard, a POW medical officer in the No.4 Camp, states that "The worst of the acute and dangerous diseases which we were faced with, apart from cholera, was malignant tertian malaria with its cerebral complications."⁴⁴⁹ Almost everyone on the railway contracted malaria: in memoirs of ex-POWs and former Japanese servicemen, malaria is always mentioned as a disease that the authors suffered from. In most cases, the disease was 'benign tertian' malaria caused by *Plasmodium vivax*. However, according to Gill, in remote camps in the jungle, up to one-third of cases were falciparum malaria caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, which was malignant and associated with complications, including cerebral malaria.⁴⁵⁰ Pavillard described cerebral malaria patients as follows:

Patients were being brought in with temperatures of 105° to 107° , and unless the proper diagnosis was made and the proper treatment given at once, the patient would sink into delirium and then into a coma, and his temperature would rise to 110° : after this there was no hope of recovery as

⁴⁴⁹ Stanley Septimus Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp.124-5.

⁴⁵⁰ Gill, 'Disease and survival on the Thai-Burma railway: lessons for modern tropical medicine?', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 2018, 1-3, p.1.

his brain was literally cooked. The important thing therefore was to keep the temperature down.”⁴⁵¹

Then, Pavillard would slowly inject quinine well diluted in saline into the patients' veins, although it could lead to sudden heart failure. It was the only life-saving technique they had.⁴⁵² Quinine is usually used to treat uncomplicated malaria, not severe forms of the disease. Nevertheless, the only medicine that the IJA could provide to treat malaria was quinine, and a sufficient amount was available. In his report, Tagami states that:

Even the Japanese forces in this [Thai-Burma border] area, when outbreaks of malaria occurred, would have been without the ability to carry out operations but for the fact that we had a considerable stock of quinine.⁴⁵³

Thus, the POWs could obtain the medicine sufficiently. Moreover, POW medical officers could get more quinine from the Japanese by padding the number of malaria patients. For instance, Hardie, a medical officer in the No.2 Camp, states in a note for his diary that, at first, in view of the inadequacy of the supply of quinine, he was compelled to inflate the number of malaria patients. However, in the entry on 7 July 1943, Hardie states that they were getting enough quinine to treat active cases.⁴⁵⁴ Pavillard also padded the number of malaria patients and obtained more quinine than he needed. Eventually, the ‘emergency reserve’ of quinine was exchanged with a cow owned by a local Thai resident. Nevertheless, Pavillard adds that “It was impossible to cope with malaria and its complications properly.”⁴⁵⁵

Besides the insufficiency of malaria preventive measures, there was a problem among the POWs. Even after a sufficient amount of quinine became available,

⁴⁵¹ Pavillard, pp.124-5.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p.125.

⁴⁵³ Tagami, op. cit., p.62.

⁴⁵⁴ Hardie, p.103.

⁴⁵⁵ Pavillard, pp.87-8.

many POWs refused to take the medicine either for prevention or cure. Pavillard often found the pills, supposed to have taken, hidden under their pillows after they had died.⁴⁵⁶ Presumably, the POWs refused the medication for its adverse effects. Therefore, prevention became still more essential. Accordingly, mosquito-nets and blankets became precious items, and thefts became frequent in the POW camps. Baynes recollects in his memoirs as follows:

There was unfortunately a lot of thieving from comrades going on in Chunkai camp. [...] Blankets, most valuable of all the captive's possessions, were stolen and sold to the Thais. With no protection from the malaria-carrying mosquito many must have died solely because of these camp thieves. Even the medical hut was broken into and our scanty supply of medicines robbed for private gain. Some became so wealthy that they were able to bribe those in charge to let them stay in camp as sick men, while the really sick were forced out to work.⁴⁵⁷

Besides, as mentioned above, there was friction among officer POWs in the No.2 Camp regarding anti-malaria activities such as oiling mosquitoes' breeding grounds. When Hardie formed an anti-malaria working party comprised of officers, some officers worked hard, but others were reluctant, saying that officers should not do the work.⁴⁵⁸ Moreover, in his diary, Hardie criticises Williamson, the No.2 Camp Commander, for his uncooperative attitude towards the anti-malaria party. Hardie said that:

But apparently the Japs are trying to get more officers out working on the railway and it looks as if Colonel Williamson, anxious as ever to comply, was trying to put the blame on me for the necessity of turning the anti-malaria party officers on to railway work.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ Pavillard, p.125.

⁴⁵⁷ Baynes, p.89.

⁴⁵⁸ Hardie, p.53.

⁴⁵⁹ Hardie, p.58.

Thus, not only mosquitos but also enemies and comrades were the factors that made malaria prevalent among the POWs.

Dysentery and digestive diseases

Dysentery and other digestive diseases were a significant cause of the POWs' deaths. According to Gill, the symptoms of dysentery are as follows: "Dysentery was an unpleasant illness – a particularly severe form of gastroenteritis with blood and mucus in the stools, which were passed with great urgency and frequency."⁴⁶⁰ There are two types of dysentery: bacillary dysentery and amoebic dysentery. Gill explains their difference as follows:

Bacillary dysentery usually resolved after 4 or 5 days, but with poor nutrition, it could last longer, and recurrent attacks were common. Amoebic dysentery lasted longer, and sometimes became chronic, and associated with significant weight loss and debility.⁴⁶¹

At that time, emetine was one cure for amoebic dysentery. Although the medicine was not highly effective, its shortage was frequent, and the relapse of the disease was common.⁴⁶²

Dysentery first broke out in the Changi Camp before the POWs were sent to Thailand, and became prevalent during the five-day train journey to Thailand. Gill holds the view that dysentery cases were mostly bacillary in the early days in Singapore, but the most chronic and debilitating amoebic dysentery was peculiar to the railway camps.⁴⁶³ Moreover, Gill considers that both types of dysentery were the leading cause of death on the railway.⁴⁶⁴ Dysentery rapidly deprived the

⁴⁶⁰ Gill, 'Coping with Crisis, Medicine and Disease on the Burma Railway 1942-1945', p.24.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pp.23-4.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p.25.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p.21.

⁴⁶⁴ Gill, 'Disease and survival on the Thai-Burma railway', p.1.

POWs of their weight and physical strength, which could not be recovered in the jungle.

In his memoirs, Pavillard recalls dysentery in Singapore as follows: "The semi-starvation diet made us very weak, and when we caught dysentery, as most of us did, we recovered very slowly."⁴⁶⁵ Furthermore, Baynes recollects the situation in his train car to Thailand as follows: "Half of our number developed dysentery during that second day, and my bucket and tin came into their own."⁴⁶⁶ Corporal Tom Fagan similarly describes in his diary the situation of his train as follows:

Dysentery has broken out and a lot of the boys are suffering from it. It is awkward here as the sanitary arrangements are very bad. The poor chaps can't get out to latrines so they dirty their clothes.⁴⁶⁷

In his diary entered on 21 November 1942, Fagan wrote that he was infected with dysentery and knocked out entirely with 150 infected in his hut. Consequently, he lost over a stone of his weight in a week.⁴⁶⁸ Presumably, many POWs already lost their weight and physical strength due to dysentery in Singapore or at the initial stage in Thailand.

Notably, in Thailand, many dysentery cases were counted as acute enteritis or other digestive diseases as the Japanese medical officers directed the POW medical officers to do so. Pavillard states that "the Japanese refused to admit that there was such a thing as dysentery among us."⁴⁶⁹ The recollection corresponds to the testimony of Major Tanio, a Japanese medical officer. In Banno and six others' trial, Tanio testified that the IJA medical officers made it rule to alter the record of dysentery cases to diarrhoea in writing death certificates. Tanio admitted that he himself had followed the practice, explaining that it was not easy to tell

⁴⁶⁵ Pavillard, p.41.

⁴⁶⁶ Baynes, pp.74-5

⁴⁶⁷ Tom Fagan, 'Corporal Tom Fagan, 105th Motor Transport Company', in *War on Our Doorstep: Diaries of Australians at the Frontline in 1942*, ed. by Gabrielle Chan (South Yarra, Vic: Hardie Grant Books, 2004). p.223.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, p.257.

⁴⁶⁹ Pavillard, p.88

amoebic dysentery from ordinary diarrhoea, and more importantly, dysentery was a legally-recognised infectious disease in Japan, which required tangled bureaucratic procedures to deal with the patients even in transporting. Thus, the Japanese medical officers thought that the official announcement of dysentery would create considerable discomfort to the patients and other POWs who were in the same compound.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, the ostensible alteration of the cause of death was aimed at avoiding severe legal restrictions, such as quarantine, as they were not practical or feasible in the camps.

Besides, certified dysentery patients could avoid working on the railway. Thus, a malingerer would try to be a 'dysentery' patient. Presumably, the Japanese wanted to avoid 'dysentery' to restrain such malingerers among the POWs, too. Interestingly, Pavillard describes in his memoirs how malingerers became 'dysentery' patients and how he stopped them. Pavillard, as a medical officer, established it as a general practice in his camp that the POWs should bring samples of their stools with them in reporting their sickness with dysentery or diarrhoea. Pavillard could tell at a glance whether it was just plain diarrhoea or bacillary or amoebic dysentery even without a microscope.⁴⁷¹ Then, Pavillard began to suspect that he was repeatedly shown the same specimens by different POWs in the sick parade. Soon it was found that a brisk trade of dysentery stools was going on. In his memoirs, Pavillard criticises 'some evil characters being prepared to sell amoebic or bacillary stools to men who did not want to work, in return for a few cigarettes or a little money.'⁴⁷² To prevent fraud, Pavillard changed his policy and required the men to produce stools in his presence. Consequently, of three hundred men lining up, ninety entered the enclosure to produce stools, and only seventeen were turned out to be genuine dysentery patients. Pavillard comments that although the malingerers called him a collaborator with the Japanese, he succeeded in protecting the interests of the genuinely sick.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio's testimony, pp.551-2.

⁴⁷¹ Pavillard, p.151.

⁴⁷² Ibid., p.152.

⁴⁷³ Ibid..

Thus, there is no knowing the actual number of dysentery patients. Nevertheless, dysentery and digestive diseases were still one of the largest causes of death among the POWs. Notably, the POWs' rapid debilitation resulted from the combination of such diseases and the inadequate, unfamiliar diet given by the Japanese. This combined problem can be explained by the adverse effect of the 'initial starvation' doctrine in treating dysentery patients. Lt. Colonel Huston, a POW senior medical officer, pointed out in his report that:

In a wasting disease such as this, with food of limited caloric value, it was essential to use all means to make patients eat every grain of rice procurable for them otherwise they consumed their body proteins which on the diet could not be replaced. Where attention to this principle was successfully enforced, results were decidedly less deplorable than where the orthodox doctrine of "initial starvation" to enable the bowel to rest lingered in the minds of certain medical officers.⁴⁷⁴

Some POW medical officers and the Japanese medical officers seem to have had in mind the orthodox doctrine of initial starvation. Notably, the Japanese adopted a policy that the food rations for the sick had to be cut by half, although there were other reasons, such as difficulty in transporting food or maintaining the POWs' incentives to work. At any rate, the 'initial starvation' resulted in the patients' deteriorated conditions.

Cholera's indirect cause of death

Once cholera broke out, the IJA placed more stress on containing rather than treating it because of its mortality and infection rates. Thus, in his report, Tagami states that:

With the increase in medical staff the cholera epidemic finally died out, due to thorough examination of faeces, isolation and preventive inoculations and

⁴⁷⁴ TNA PRO WO208/3258, 'Medical Report on F Force by Lt. Col. Huston', p.16.

also to improved conditions after the rainy season.⁴⁷⁵

Notably, the IJA's medical corps had already experienced cholera epidemics, prevention and containment in China and Manchuria when they faced the disease in Thailand.⁴⁷⁶ Tagami's statement corresponds to Hardie's view on the Japanese handling of cholera. Hardie stated in his diary that:

The whole camp is to be inoculated with cholera vaccine. A Japanese pathologist from the laboratory a few kilometres down-river was here a couple of days. He said he identified the vibrio in specimens. He seemed to know something of his subject.

The Nips, it will be seen, are doing everything to prevent the spread of cholera. They have done nothing at all for the men who get it. ⁴⁷⁷

In his report, Tagami presents a view that the infection was due to unsuitable equipment for purifying water.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, as Hardie states in his diary, the Japanese provided the POWs with another filter-pump for the cooking houses and a 40-gallon drum for the hospital to improve the water supply.⁴⁷⁹ However, the epidemic area expanded along the river from camp to camp, where the camp authorities placed many restrictions on the POWs' activities. Thus, the outbreak and the subsequent preventive or containing measures necessarily influenced the POWs' living.

For instance, Corporal Tatsuo Morohoshi, who worked for sanitary arrangements and disease prevention under the 9th Railway Regiment, states in his memoirs the following fact. In May 1943, Morohashi, given the cholera

⁴⁷⁵ Tagami, p.62.

⁴⁷⁶ See JACAR, Ref.B05015319600, Miscellaneous documents relating to the Dojinkai Foundation/ Administration of prevention-of-epidemic affairs Vol. 4(H-4-2-0-3_5_004)(Diplomatic Archives of MOFA).

⁴⁷⁷ Hardie, p.95.

⁴⁷⁸ Tagami, p.61.

⁴⁷⁹ Hardie, p.95.

prevention assignment, saw an Australian POW get infected with cholera.⁴⁸⁰ Morohashi inferred three possible routes of the infection: the POW might have drunk the river water during work; he might have eaten a fish; or he might have contacted local people who carried cholera.⁴⁸¹

Thus, the Japanese camp authorities strictly prohibited the POWs from drinking fresh water, bathing in the river, and having contacts with local people. Hardie in Takanun Camp states in his diary on 15 May 1943 that “There are rumours of cholera up the river, and bathing (and fishing!) are restricted.”⁴⁸² On 23 May, Hardie found suspected cholera patients in his camp hospital.⁴⁸³ On 26 May, Hardie confirmed ten deaths from cholera and stated in the diary that: “Bathing in the river has been stopped.”; “All purchases from Siamese boats and barges, even of eggs for cooking have been prohibited.”⁴⁸⁴ For the POWs, bathing and washing in the river were essential to maintain their cleanliness, and the purchases from local Thais were necessary to supplement nutrition which the food rations lacked. Thus, the cholera epidemic indirectly caused the deterioration of the POWs' health conditions. Tagami points out that a cause of the infection came from the POWs' poor living conditions, in which they were tired out physically and did not take care of their sanitation.⁴⁸⁵ Baynes states in his memoirs that “Then, when all were at their lowest ebb, that most dread disease of all, cholera, appeared among them.”⁴⁸⁶

Thus, the cholera epidemic created a dilemma: the disease preventive measures would cause the deterioration of the POWs' health conditions, but the deteriorated physical fitness would make the POWs susceptible to various diseases.

⁴⁸⁰ Tatsuo Morahashi, ‘Cholera’, in Kazuo Tamayama(ed.), *Building the Burma-Thailand Railway: An Epic of World War II, 1942-43: Tales by Japanese Army Engineers* (Tokyo: Total E Media, 2004), p41.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Hardie, p.93.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.94.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p.95.

⁴⁸⁵ Tagami, p.61.

⁴⁸⁶ Baynes, p.117.

Food and the POWs

The resistance to diseases was the key to survival in the jungle. Nevertheless, the resistance of human bodies varied according to circumstances and cultural backgrounds. In his report, Tagami points out that European POWs were inclined to become ill as their resistance to diseases was lowered when they took a large amount of carbohydrates before their bodies had become adapted to it. Thus, the POWs who had to eat considerable quantities of rice as a staple diet in the camp would have their resistance lowered. Moreover, a temporary shortage of food, especially vegetables, would weaken the resistance further.⁴⁸⁷ Indeed, food became vital for the POWs' survival in the jungle. In this section, the POWs' food problem will be discussed.

A British officer states in his memoirs as follows:

For dinner (I see it sadly noted down) I had a filled-up plate of rice, with a little pork wherewith to give it savour. Bread, coffee, vegetables, tea, sugar and salt seemed dreams of the past, although hopes were held out that the last three items would be forthcoming next day.⁴⁸⁸

The reminiscence above was written not by a POW in Japanese hands during WWII but by Ian Hamilton, a British army officer, who was sent to the IJA as an observer of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). His recollection about the IJA's food ration indicates a crucial fact: the quantity and the quality of food for Japanese people differ significantly from those for Westerners. In other words, food exemplifies cultural differences between different nations, influencing the physical conditions of their armies. Thus, almost all the POWs captured by the Japanese during WWII suffered from the food problem, which often caused malnutrition, diseases and deaths. Thus, the cultural difference in food between the IJA and the Allied forces are worth examining in detail.

In the amendment of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the concept of 'the

⁴⁸⁷ Tagami, p.62

⁴⁸⁸ Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book During the Russo-Japanese War* (London: E. Arnold, 1905). p.59.

habitual diet of the prisoners' was introduced.

Article 11. The 1929 Geneva Conventions

The food ration of prisoners of war shall be equivalent in quantity and quality to that of the depot troops.⁴⁸⁹

Article 26. The 1949 Geneva Conventions

The basic daily food rations shall be sufficient in quantity, quality and variety to keep prisoners of war in good health and to prevent loss of weight or the development of nutritional deficiencies. Account shall also be taken of the habitual diet of the prisoners.⁴⁹⁰

In fact, the amendment's point was already observed by a Japanese commandant of a POW camp. Torajiro Urata, the Commandant of No.3 Branch, Fukuoka POW Camp, states that:

It is thought that medicines and remedies studied on the constitution of the Japanese, who had lived eating mainly rice, wheat, and fish, could not be applied to Westerners whose constitution had been developed by eating bread, potato, pork and beef. The sudden change of their daily diet (degradation to them) weakened their immune system and caused pneumonia or failures in their digestive system.⁴⁹¹

Urada observed the POWs in Fukuoka, Japan, where their camp conditions and

⁴⁸⁹ ICRC website: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8E9C103689020E3BC12563CD00518DED>

⁴⁹⁰ ICRC website: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=645D26CB1CB2F384C12563CD0051AC97#:~:text=Geneva%2C%2012%20August%201949.&text=The%20basic%20daily%20food%20rations,habitua%20diet%20of%20the%20prisoners.>

⁴⁹¹ Torajiro Urada quoted in Hiroike, p.287.

daily labour were milder than those in Thailand and Burma. Under the harsh conditions of the railway camps, the sudden change in diets would be amplified and affect the POWs' health conditions more significantly.

Header, who researched Australian medical officers in POW camps, points out the influence of the sudden change in diet in Singapore POW camps as follows:

Within two weeks of captivity the radical change in diet – from Australian army rations to mostly rice and a few vegetables given by the Japanese – caused widespread digestive problems.⁴⁹²

Also, Parkes and Gill, medical experts at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, explain that:

Rice is rich in carbohydrates but the Caucasian digestive tract was unaccustomed to an almost exclusively carbohydrate diet being used to a balanced diet of nutrients including fats, proteins and vitamins.⁴⁹³

POWs' food

It is generally thought that the Japanese always provided the POWs with an inadequate amount of food ration. It is correct except for one item – rice. Both ex-POWs and former IJA servicemen recall that rice was sufficient except when supply routes were completely cut. While having difficulty in transporting supplies, the IJA seized a large amount of rice in Burma after the British capitulation. According to Ashley Jackson, colonial Burma, 'the Empire's biggest rice bowl'⁴⁹⁴, was able to export rice all over the British Empire before the war. Thus, it is reasonable that the IJA could and did provide quite a sufficient amount of rice to

⁴⁹² Header, p.86.

⁴⁹³ M. Parkes and G.V. Gill, *Captive Memories* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2015), p.100.

⁴⁹⁴ Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p.404.

the POWs.

The POWs in Singapore often described their new diet in their diaries and memoirs. For instance, Lieutenant Gerard Veitch described the plentifulness of rice in his diary on 26 April 1942 as follows:

An increase in rations was asked for as milk had given out and flour was getting low also we were getting about 4 oz of meat every second day. The only increase we got was rice from 16 oz to 24 oz per day.⁴⁹⁵

As rice became the POWs' staple food in Singapore, the IJA authorities began collecting and storing it, employing some POWs for the work with payment. James Roxburgh wrote in his diary that:

The Japs are paying the men working in town now. They give them a huge sum of 10 cents a day and pay them in Japanese money which is not worth the paper it is written on. The work the men are doing now is stacking and loading 200 lb bags of rice and this is tough work on the food we get.⁴⁹⁶

Although the POW camps' conditions along the railway during the construction period were worse in every aspect than those in Singapore, the provision of rice was maintained in those camps as long as supplies routes were usable. According to Hiroike's memoirs, the official food ration scales per person per day for the Japanese and the POWs working on the railway were as follows: ⁴⁹⁷

Japanese

Staple food 800g

Meat 210g

⁴⁹⁵ Gerard Veitch, 'Lieutenant Gerard Veitch, 2/9th & 2/10th Field Ambulance, POW, Changi Prison Camp, Singapore' in *War on Our Doorstep*, p.90.

⁴⁹⁶ James Roxburgh, 'Sergeant James Roxburgh, 2/30th Battalion, AIF, Changi Prison Camp, Singapore' in *War On Our Door Step*, p.67.

⁴⁹⁷ Hiroike, pp.415-6.

Vegetable 600g
Pickles 60g
Miso Paste 75g
Sugar 20g
Salt 5g
Tea 3g
Alcohol 0.4L
Beer half a bottle
Vitamin supplement; 4.2g

POWs

Staple food (polished rice, rice powder, other cereals) 550g/ increase up to 750g for those working.
Meat 50g/ increase up to 150g for those working.
Vegetable 100g/ increase up to 500g for those working.
Sugar 20g
Salt 5g
Oil/Fat 5g
Tea: 3g.

This official ration scale for the POWs roughly corresponds to figures provided by Gale, who was Acting R.Q.M.S. and in charge of rations for the D Force Battalion in the No.4 Camp until the end of 1943. In the trial of Ishida and three others, Gale testified about the conditions of the POW camps based on his diary dated 15 November 1942, according to which, Lieutenant Hattori, a Japanese camp staff, notified him of the official ration scale per person per day by, as follows:⁴⁹⁸

Rice 20 ounces (567g)
Vegetables 17 ounces (482g)
Meat 3.5 ounces (99g)
Tinned Food 3.5 ounces (99g)

⁴⁹⁸ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, pp.54-5.

Sugar 2/3 ounce (19g)

Ghee or Cooking Fat 2/3 ounce (19g)

Flour, either Sago, Tapioca or wheat – 1 and 2/3 ounces (47g)

Salt 1/6 ounce (4.8g)

Tea 1/6 ounce (4.8g)

Eventually, for those working on the railway, the meat ration scale was increased to 150g. Hiroike recollects in his memoirs how the increase was decided. After seeing the original food ration scale for the POWs, Commander Shimoda of the Railway Corps requested Commander Sassa of the Thai POW Camp to increase the amount of meat. At that time, the POWs' meat ration scale was 50g. Shimoda, having had an experience of studying in Germany, was familiar with food suitable for Westerners. However, the POW Camp Administration missed Shimoda's request. Later, when the No.2 Camp started the regular Friday meetings to frankly discuss various topics, the increase of meat ration for POWs was approved. It was the first successful case for the POWs to make the Japanese grant a POW request in the Friday meeting. Having heard the request, Sassa immediately approved it with Shimoda's advice.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, a 50-gram increase of meat per person per day was approved to make the ration scale 100g, and a month later, the second rise made it 150g.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the ration scale was not always met as was planned. Gale testified that the POWs had not received that ration scale fully.⁵⁰⁰ It was mainly because heavy and incessant rains caused great difficulty in transporting food and medical supplies through the jungle. Also, Tarumoto recalls in his memoirs that, at Nonplai, where the long-distance made it difficult to secure the supplies, even his platoon had no fresh vegetables but some dried ones in the soup, and the situation was showing that the prospect of sending POWs with food to the area was dismal.⁵⁰¹ A similar description can be found in Baynes' memoirs as follows:

⁴⁹⁹ Hiroike, pp.164-5.

⁵⁰⁰ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, pp.54-5.

⁵⁰¹ Tarumoto, p.142.

I heard afterwards that after many days of gruelling marches the survivors of our party from Wun Lung arrived at their destination in very bad condition. The Japs had difficulty in getting rations through to them, and they lived on nothing but an inadequate supply of plain rice.⁵⁰²

Therefore, in order to supplement their alimentary deficiency, the POWs were allowed in their camps to buy extra food at canteens run by local people except for specific occasions. Some camps had canteens with extensive goods, whereas others not. Local vendors did not show up where POWs had no money or valuable items to exchange. Moreover, canteens were run under the authorisation of camp commandants. Thus, their personalities became an essential factor for POWs' health conditions. In his memoirs, Adams describes a canteen in his camp as follows:

Fortunately he [a Japanese camp commandant] soon left us for another camp. His place was taken by 2nd Lieutenant Takasaki, whom we quickly nicknamed 'The Frog', and who proved more amenable than his sadistic and stubborn predecessor. He allowed us to set up a canteen selling cigarettes and small item of food, and we were able to trade with the natives outside camp, for eggs, rice-cake confections (known as 'dysentery cakes'), tobacco, and something called '*Gula Malacca*', which is a kind of sweet, looking like brown condensed milk, made from the sap of a particular palm tree.⁵⁰³

However, the outbreak of cholera changed the situation. In his diary dated 26 May 1943, Hardie states that:

Cooking, which had become a little more varied before cholera broke out, thanks to purchases of sugar, soya bean and some frying oil, has been restricted again to rice and stew, to give as little chance as possible to flies to

⁵⁰² Baynes, p.117.

⁵⁰³ Adams, p.61.

spread infection by contaminating incompletely covered food.⁵⁰⁴

This is how infectious diseases such as cholera influenced the POWs' living by posing a dilemma: the cholera preventive scheme could deteriorate the POWs' nutritive conditions and physical fitness.

Rice problem

Furthermore, the POWs' physical fitness was presumably weaker than that of Japanese soldiers. Indeed, the quantity of food issued by the IJA was inadequate to sustain their health, but there is another aspect of diet – the habitual diet. In short, POWs were not accustomed to a rice diet and thus could not assimilate the staple food efficiently even though the IJA provided a sufficient amount of rice. Moreover, there were two points in this rice problem. One is that the rice diet caused a digestive disorder, which directly affected the POWs' physical strength. The other is that a psychological factor prevented the POWs from eating rice, indirectly influencing their physical conditions.

Regarding the digestion of rice, Hamilton's recollection is suggestive: during his stay with the IJA in the Russo-Japanese War, he had a rice diet, which made him hungry soon. In his memoirs, Hamilton states that:

This first bento [packed lunch] contained about a desert-spoonful of cold pork cut into small pieces, and a large quantity of cold rice. I cleaned up the bento to the last grain of rice; felt for a minute as if I had over-eaten myself, and presently became rather hungrier and more empty than ever. Vincent tells me that the property of expansion followed by sinking or melting away to nothing is peculiar to rice.⁵⁰⁵

Presumably, his body could not digest and assimilate rice efficiently, and thus a sensation of fullness was not given. Digestion and assimilation would be worsened under unsanitary conditions with hard labour that the POWs experienced during

⁵⁰⁴ Hardie, p.95.

⁵⁰⁵ Hamilton, p.58.

WWII. Indeed, the POWs had digestive problems with a rice diet. Adams states in his memoirs that “The sudden change from a European to a coolie diet meant that everyone was constantly on the run to our latrine on the hill.”⁵⁰⁶ The fact that POWs called rice-cake confections sold by local vendors ‘dysentery cakes’ implies that rice, in any form, was hard for their bodies to digest and assimilate properly.

Besides, Adams heard a negative rumour about rice spreading among the POWs and states that:

There was a persistent rumour that a diet of unrelieved rice led to impotence; whence came the expression applied to any job which appeared impossible – ‘you can’t do it on rice!’.⁵⁰⁷

Such a rumour, which might have come from beriberi symptoms, as well as the phrase ‘dysentery cakes’, implies the POWs’ psychological aversion to a rice diet. Understandably, Westerners disliked a rice diet as its plain taste and peculiar smell were uncomfortable for their mouths. Indeed, many POWs express their dissatisfaction with a rice diet in their diaries and memoirs. For instance, Sergeant Roxburgh, a member of the POW working party in Singapore, complained about the rice diet in his diary dated 6 May 1942: “Meals today were 9.30 Rice, gravy, tea 11.00 Rice, milk, no tea 5.30 Rice and stew with lumps of MEAT in it. Didn’t it taste good.”⁵⁰⁸ Pte. Wilkie states in his diary dated 12 June 1942 that: “Sorry to lose the bread as I didn’t need any rice, I could make do with bread, about two ounces a meal.”⁵⁰⁹

Rice was undoubtedly unwelcomed by the POWs. It is partly because they had little knowledge about how to cook rice or its side dishes properly. For instance, Baynes recalls their rice diet just after the capitulation of Singapore as follows:

⁵⁰⁶ Adams, p.36.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p.37.

⁵⁰⁸ Roxburgh, p.100.

⁵⁰⁹ Edgar Wilkie, ‘Private Edgar Wilkie, POW, Kuala Lumpur’ in *War On Our Door Step*, p.127.

Our diet now consisted of little else besides boiled rice, and our cooks had not yet learned the right way to cook it. To those who have taken their rice only in the form of rice pudding, or tenderly boiled with curry, ours, just boiled in water and served with hard lumps in the middle of every grain was far from appetising. Yet before long men were squabbling over the remains in the dixie after all had been served.⁵¹⁰

Furthermore, in the POW camps along the railway, cooking in the jungle added more difficulties to the POWs' rice diet. Sergeant Frank Foster described in detail such difficulties as follows:

Cooking rice was something new to us and we had to learn the eastern method. The only cooking utensil we had was a cast-iron pan called 'quarlie', about three feet wide and six inches deep. You make an earth support from this and burn the fuel underneath. Now I suppose most of you think that in countries so densely timbered as Burma and Siam there would be plenty of wood fuel. But there isn't. The rainfall is so heavy that all growing timber is green. The only fuel that is of any use is dead bamboo sticks, which we had to pull out from the middle of the prickly green clumps. This burns all right, in fact very fiercely for a few minutes; but then you have got to put on some more, and it's quite impossible to get that even heat which I now know is necessary for cooking rice. Then there was the problem of water. The only water we could get was from the muddy stream close by. As the fierce fire burned the rice in the bottom of the quarlie the amateur cooks added more muddy water. The result was a steamed and burnt brown lumpy dish of rice.⁵¹¹

Besides, Baynes observed in Singapore that rice given to the POWs was off-white, containing broken reject grains, whereas the Japanese had 'beautiful white' rice.⁵¹² Also, Gale testified in the trial that the rice the POWs received was the 'lowest

⁵¹⁰ Baynes, pp.25-6.

⁵¹¹ Frank Foster, 'Railway of Death', *The Listener*, 15 November 1945, p.555.

⁵¹² Baynes, pp.28-9.

quality of broken rice', but the Japanese had the first-class quality.⁵¹³ According to the IJA's official ration scale, it was regulated that the POWs' staple food should consist of polished rice, ground rice, and cereals.⁵¹⁴ Indeed, white rice tastes better than off-white rice, but it is also true that rice with cereals contains more vitamins than white rice. At any rate, the second-class rice might have fuelled the POWs' aversion to a rice diet.

Also, there was some difficulty in storing rice in camps. Thus, in the Changi Camp, the POWs, at first, got surprised to find 'white grubs about an inch long' in their rice.⁵¹⁵ Pte. Watson states in his diary dated 23 May 1942 that: "Back to camp and to rice and invisible stew. I got 14 grubs in mine, the highest tally yet. [...] 17 grubs at tea time."⁵¹⁶ The 'grub' matter was presumably a reason why POWs hesitated to eat rice at least in the early stage of their captivity. Nevertheless, Gill points out that although POW cooks tried to wash out contaminants such as grits and weevils in rice initially, they came to cook rice as it was so as not to lose further Vitamin B.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, Pavillard states that "The weevils in our rice could be thought of as a kind of meat ration."⁵¹⁸ Thus, the POWs eventually prioritised the vitamin/protein intake over the taste.

Besides, in South East Asia, mould could become rife quickly because of the high temperature and humidity. Generally, polished rice can be kept longer than unpolished rice, but under highly humid conditions, even polished rice get mouldy very quickly. In the trial, Gale complained that:

The rice was almost without exception mildew. The mould flavoured the whole rice throughout each sack. In addition in most sacks quite a large part had caked hard with mould and age, so that it would not cook and would not

⁵¹³ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.55.

⁵¹⁴ Hiroike, p.416.

⁵¹⁵ Roxburgh, p.67.

⁵¹⁶ Charles Watson, 'Private Charles Watson, 4th Australian Reserve Motor Transport Company, Victoria Point, Burma' in *War On Our Door Step*, p.110.

⁵¹⁷ Gill, 'Coping with Crisis, Medicine and Disease on the Burma Railway 1942-1945', pp.89-90.

⁵¹⁸ Pavillard, p.42.

soften with cooking. That had to be thrown away.⁵¹⁹

Gale added that the quality and the quantity of rice started to improve after June 1943.⁵²⁰ Judging from Gale's testimony, the POWs were presumably given *kuzumai* or broken rice, and *komai* or old rice, both of which do not taste or smell good and thus cost less, although still edible with appropriate cooking methods. Japanese cooks know rice-cooking techniques as common knowledge, but POWs did not.

Furthermore, the rainy weather and the subsequent flood in the autumn of 1942 worsened the IJA's rice storage condition. On 19 October 1942, Chalker and his fellow POWs arrived at the Ban Pong Camp, which was in 'a sea of mud and water' because of the monsoon rain and flood. In his memoirs, Chalker describes the situation as follows:

Everywhere faeces were floating in the pools of water and the whole place was extremely depressing. Food here was equally appalling. We were given some sour and almost cold rice and vegetable water, and spent a loathsome night [...].⁵²¹

Probably, the sour rice already became mouldy or rotten. Moreover, Hiroike states in his memoirs that because of the great flood in the autumn of 1942, 400 rice bags got submerged in water and were moved from Chungkai, carried by the POWs.⁵²² Such rice would quickly become rotten or mouldy and cause digestive malfunctioning to those who ate it. Under such conditions, the physical strength of the POWs deteriorated rapidly.

Rice and beriberi

Besides, there was a concern among the POWs that a rice diet could cause beriberi.

⁵¹⁹ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.55.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p.58.

⁵²¹ Chalker, p.37.

⁵²² Hiroike, p.168.

Indeed, the above-mentioned figure of the POWs' diseases and deaths indicates that beriberi was the fourth-largest cause of death in the railway camps. Beriberi's main symptoms are difficulty in walking, loss of feeling in hands and feet, loss of muscle function or paralysis of the lower legs, mental confusion, speech difficulties, pain, strange eye movements, tingling, vomiting, and heart failure.⁵²³ Notably, the failure of the cardiovascular system could cause death.

These symptoms were already seen in the early stage of the POWs' captivity. According to Carpenter, it takes some ninety days on a white rice diet for beriberi symptoms to appear.⁵²⁴ Thus, the POWs developed the disease as early as May or June 1942 while still in Singapore. In his memoirs, Pavillard recollects the POWs' beriberi symptoms in Singapore as follows:

We began to feel that our feet did not belong to us, that we were walking on cottonwool; at the same time the soles of the feet burned as if they were on fire. As the disease progressed, first the legs would start to swell, and then the swelling would travel upwards until in some cases the testicles looked like footballs. Sometimes the disease attacked the nervous system, and we lost muscular control of our feet.⁵²⁵

The cause of the disease is the deficiency of Vitamin B1, which polished rice does not contain. As long as well-balanced side-dishes are given, the rice diet does not directly cause the deficiency disease. The POWs' misfortune was that their captor had a predilection for white rice, and thus beriberi was the national disease of modern Japan.

Besides, the cause of beriberi was elucidated only after 1910. Vitamin B1 compound was first isolated in 1910 by Umetaro Suzuki, a Japanese agricultural

⁵²³ NIH GARD, 'Beriberi'

<<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/9948/beriberi>>

⁵²⁴ Kenneth J. Carpenter, *Beriberi, White Rice, and Vitamin B: A Disease, a Cause, and a Cure* (Berkeley, Calif.; London : University of California Press, 2000), p.156.

⁵²⁵ Pavillard, p.43.

chemist, and a cure for beriberi was introduced by using rice bran. Before Suzuki's discovery, Christiaan Eijkman, a Dutch military physician, had already found in 1897 that unpolished rice cured chickens' beriberi symptoms. Nevertheless, the relevance between polished rice and beriberi was already discovered in 1883 by Kanehiro Takaki, an IJN medical officer who had studied epidemiology at St. Thomas Hospital in London.

At that time, the IJN was beset with beriberi which killed many sailors. Takaki noticed that his beriberi patients ate white rice in large amounts with a tiny side dish. Takaki thought that such a diet might have been the cause of the disease and presumed that beriberi was caused by the lack of protein in unbalanced diets with a large portion of polished rice. Thus, Takaki introduced to the navy well-balanced diets such as rice with barley and curry. His success in eradicating the disease by 1886 brought him the nickname 'Barley Baron'.

However, despite Takaki's success in eradicating beriberi in the IJN, the cause of beriberi was not fully identified in academia. For instance, a British official document indicates the following fact. On 10 November 1908, the Resident-General of the Federated Malay States in Kuala Lumpur sent the Secretary of State in London a telegram informing him that experiments conducted by Dr Fraser and Dr Stanton to discover the cause of beriberi were being kept confidential, not to be published.⁵²⁶ Their experiments did not identify the cause of beriberi, but the fact suggests that, at the time, the cause of beriberi was not established academically.

Thus, the IJA adopted a different approach from the IJN to deal with beriberi.⁵²⁷ Consequently, it led to a great tragedy in the Russo-Japanese War. During the war, the IJA had 250,000⁵²⁸ beriberi patients and lost 28,000 soldiers

⁵²⁶ TNA PRO FCO141/15893, 'Singapore: Report by Dr Fraser and Dr Stanton on Experiments in the Treatment of Beriberi, 1908'.

⁵²⁷ See Carpenter, p.10.

⁵²⁸ Mitsuyoshi Nishizawa, a medical doctor and a historian, suggests that the figure of beriberi patients in the Russo-Japanese War included shell-shock patients. Shell shock and beriberi have similar symptoms: for instance, difficulties in talking or walking properly. See Mitsuyoshi Nishizawa, 'Mori Ogai "kakke sekinin ron" wa enzai', *Rekishitsu*, September 2012, 186-193.

from the disease alone, whereas 47,000 IJA servicemen died from wounds.

The IJA took a position that beriberi stemmed from a bacterial or a viral cause as Dr Robert Koch, a German eminent physician and microbiologist, supported the 'microbiological cause' theory. At that time, almost all Japanese elite medical doctors, who had graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University and learned German-style medicine, held this view. In fact, IJA doctors knew the fact that a mixed diet of rice and barley could prevent beriberi. However, they regarded such a diet as unscientific traditional folk medicine, whereas the IJN had already adopted such diets. Thus, it is often said that the IJA's German-style elitism and the rivalry between the IJA and IJN became a disincentive for the IJA to follow the IJN's method which was not authorised by elite academics.⁵²⁹

However, it is also true that the white rice diet was a matter of practicality and morale for the IJA. Polished rice is less bulky and has a longer life than brown rice. In other words, white rice was suitable to carry in expeditions. More importantly, the IJA authorities promised that soldiers could eat as much white rice as they wanted. Notably, white rice was a symbol of proper, delicious diets for the lower working class, from which most soldiers were recruited. The breaking of the promise would lead to deteriorating morale in the IJA. Consequently, beriberi became catastrophically prevalent in the IJA in the Russo-Japanese War.

Such a fatal and unfamiliar disease might have influenced the POWs' mentality in eating the IJA's white rice and thus their physical conditions. In his memoirs, Basil Peacock recollects the POWs' attitude towards a rice diet:

We were now confirmed, though unwilling, rice-eaters, up to sixteen ounces per day. This might seem a lot to rice-pudding-makers, but it is necessary to eat that quantity if it is a staple diet. People even got particular and fussy, having heard of polished rice causing beriberi. The pernickety sprinkled the husks and dust from the bottom of the rice sacks on the top of their ration to ensure they took in the necessary vitamins and additives.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ See Carpenter, p.88.

⁵³⁰ Basil Peacock, *Prisoner on the Kwai* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1966). pp.60-61.

Thus, the POWs' avoidance of rice presumably resulted from the combination of their half knowledge that 'polished rice causes beriberi' and their disaffection with the taste. Notably, their avoidance of the staple diet became one of the significant factors that worsened the POWs' physical conditions even before the railway construction. Peacock states that:

In the matter of rations, the British have always expected more and been more choosy than other soldiers. [...] Many took a long time to understand that rice was to be their staple diet for the remainder of the war, refused to eat it at the beginning, and lost far too much weight for them to recover when a better ration was available.⁵³¹

Such a better ration was never available in the POW camps in the jungle, and thus they could not recover the initial loss of weight. Some POWs still feared and hated the rice diet in the camps, whereas the only sufficient food ration that the IJA managed to provide was rice. Basically, the IJA failed to provide a well-balanced diet to the POWs. Thus, beriberi and malnutrition became a real threat to the POWs during their captivity. Harder points out that:

[POW] Doctors had to respond by quickly learning the intricacies of nutrition in the unfamiliar foods around them and how best to prepare them for maximum effect and digestibility.⁵³²

Some POW medical officers had tropical experience in the colonies, but such experience could not help them cope with the deficiency disease. Thus, Gill points out that beriberi 'presented a great clinical and therapeutic challenge' to the POW medical officers.⁵³³ Indeed, the problem of food rations embodies a cultural gap between the captor and the captive.

⁵³¹ Ibid., pp.6-7.

⁵³² Harder, p.87.

⁵³³ Gill, op. cit., p.88.

The POW authorities and the Japanese camp authorities took some measures in their limited circumstances to cope with the disease. The most effective measure was the provision of rice bran, which contains Vitamin B1 and is a cure for the disease. Gale testified that the Japanese supplied the POWs with rice bran: the POWs purchased rice bran on their own up to March 1943, and after that, Hattori supplied them with rice bran and repaid them for a part of the rice bran that they had bought. Since then, the Japanese provided the POWs with rice bran on occasion, and the POWs could purchase more.⁵³⁴

It is intriguing how the POWs consumed rice bran, which even Japanese people do not eat directly. Japanese usually pickle vegetables and meat with fermented, salted rice bran. Nevertheless, vegetables and meat were short in the POW camps. Presumably, the POWs had no choice but to eat rice bran directly. Gale testified that:

As rice polishings are extremely unpalatable, they were sufficient to meet the wishes of the ordinary troops but not the wishes of the medical officers there.⁵³⁵

Regarding how to intake rice bran, Header explains that:

[Rice polishings] were too potent for most weakened men to digest directly, and so had to be further processed. One such method was to boil mass amounts of rice polishings in calico bags, leave them for twenty-four hours and then reboil them and issue the water extract.⁵³⁶

The multitude of beriberi patients among the POWs indicates how difficult it was for them to take unfamiliar food and how inadequate the IJA's food rations were.

Efforts to provide meat and vegetables

⁵³⁴ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.55.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Header, p.88.

When the POWs were suffering from diseases caused by the deficiency of nutrition and vitamins, how did the IJA respond to the situation? As supply routes were often cut during the rainy season, the Japanese made efforts to provide the POWs with meat and vegetables by feeding cattle and planting vegetables. Adams had a unique experience of a cattle drive. In his memoirs, Adams describes how he took charge and completed the mission.

Suzuki [the commandant of Kinsaiyok camp] had persuaded his headquarters to release one hundred of the cattle held nearby for the Japanese, for our new camp, so that we could eat better, and work better!⁵³⁷

Having been a butcher before joining the army, Adams was selected as the cattle driver up to the Kwai valley. The drive was a ten-day march without a map for 120 km to Konkaita, the 261 km point from Non-Pladuk. It was in early September amid the rainy season.⁵³⁸ Adams and his men succeeded in bringing more than seventy cows out of the original one hundred. Fallen cows were given to nearby camps, where both the POWs and the Japanese welcomed unexpected meat supplies.⁵³⁹

A Japanese source indicates that there was a cattle-breeding farm in the Kinsaiyok camp. In the trial of Ishida and three others, the defence counsel submitted to the court a photo of the farm in Kinsaiyok as evidence. The photo has a caption that "Cattle breeding at the first detachment of the No.4 Camp located at Kinsaiyoke, which shows an endeavour to supply meat to the POWs."⁵⁴⁰ The evidence corresponds to what Adams states in his memoirs.

In the same trial, Gale testified that their meals began to improve from January 1943, and the POWs could get a bit of meat and vegetables apart from marrow which they had enough from the beginning.⁵⁴¹ Gale explained why the meat ration

⁵³⁷ Adams, p.88.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., pp.88-9, 106.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., pp.90-106.

⁵⁴⁰ TNA PRO WO235/963, Defence evidence, Photos of POW camp, p.813.

⁵⁴¹ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.56.

increased from January 1943 as follows:

At the end of 1942, Lt. Col. Lilly, in charge of WAMPO CAMP, approached the Japanese for permission to buy cattle out of our own money for a meat supply for ourselves. Permission was granted after some little delay. Thereupon, in the presence of Japanese guards, we made arrangements with Siam to drive herds of cattle up to our camp. These cattle arrived early in January 1943 and we ate them from time to time.⁵⁴²

According to Gale's testimony, the POW authorities paid for all the cattle on arrival for the moment, but subsequently, the Japanese repaid them half of the costs.⁵⁴³ Thus, there was a cooperative arrangement between the POWs and the Japanese in the No.4 Camp. As a result, the meat ration per person per day increased to 2.5 ounces for the first quarter of 1943.⁵⁴⁴ From March onwards, the Japanese also drove herds of cattle up to them, and thus the amount of issue increased further.⁵⁴⁵

Besides, the IJA camp staff cultivated vegetable fields in the camps. For instance, a photo preserved in the NIDS' archives shows a vegetable field in the Takanun Camp.⁵⁴⁶ Although the size of such a field is unknown, the vegetables contributed to the food rations to a certain extent. Notably, Ishida points out that even when supply routes were usable, fresh vegetables sent to up-country camps would become rotten after three days, and one-third of vegetables received at Konkoita were not eatable.⁵⁴⁷

Gale also testified that their vegetable ration improved considerably from January to September 1943 and that the POWs received the same amount of vegetables as the authorised ration scale on two days out of three. Moreover, food

⁵⁴² Ibid., p.57.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., p.58.

⁵⁴⁶ Tomoo Saito, 'Pictures of the Burma-Thailand Railway Construction donated by Tomoo Saito', 1959, Military Archives, NIDS, South-West Photo-4.

⁵⁴⁷ Ishida, p.117.

rations generally improved after September 1943. Nevertheless, dried soybeans began to replace the fresh vegetables until the POWs became tired of them.⁵⁴⁸ It should be noted that soybeans contain vitamin B1. However, the POWs' bodies might not have digested the dried beans efficiently. Hearder points out that, from 1943 in the Changi camp, the IJA began to supply soybeans, which contain protein and B Vitamins, but the POWs did not know how to process them to make them edible. Then, the POW medical officers thought that men's digestive systems could not cope with soybeans and thus passed them whole.⁵⁴⁹

Regarding the quantity and the quality of the food rations in the camps, Gale testified that the Japanese got slightly more vegetables than the POWs and always took the best quality.⁵⁵⁰ The POWs' complaints are understandable as the amounts of meat and vegetables were never appropriate for them to sustain their health. Nevertheless, it is also true that the Japanese camp staff at least made efforts to provide the POWs with meat, vegetables and dried beans.

Other influences of rice diet on POWs' health

The deterioration of the POWs' health conditions caused by unfamiliar and inadequate food rations could be seen as early as their internment in Singapore camps after the capitulation. The initial effect of the new diet was mild, as Pavillard states in his memoirs that: "This diet had a peculiar effect: we had to be continually urinating, and often I had to spend ten or fifteen pennies in the course of a night."⁵⁵¹ Moreover, Pte. Smith, captive in the Changi Prison, states in his diary dated 22 May 1942 that "The fact of eating nothing but boiled rice and tea with no milk or sugar, rice being about seventy per cent water makes the getting up habit rather severe."⁵⁵² Hunger might have hampered the POWs' sleep. This was the initial stage of the deterioration of the POWs' health. Subsequently, the

⁵⁴⁸ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.58.

⁵⁴⁹ Hearder, pp.89-90.

⁵⁵⁰ TNA PRO WO235/963, Gale's testimony, p.59.

⁵⁵¹ Pavillard, p.41.

⁵⁵² Ron Smith, 'Private Ron Smith, 8th Division, POW, Changi Prison Camp, Singapore' in *War On Our Door Step*, p.108.

POWs began to lose weight. Captain Curlewis states in his diary dated 20 June 1942, when the IJA provided the POWs with postcards to send some messages to their families, that: "I considered saying 'I am quite well and now weigh 10 stone' to indicate the food rations but wiped it as likely to cause worry. I pray for its safe delivery."⁵⁵³ Ten stone is equal to 63.5kg, which does not seem to be an appropriate weight for a Western male.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, with the outbreak of dysentery, many POWs were in deteriorated physical conditions when they arrived in Thailand, where hard labour was awaiting them. Their digestive system weakened by the new diet was devastated by the disease, which severely deprived the POWs of their weight and physical strength in a short period.

Nevertheless, the POWs' dissatisfaction towards rice, often expressed as 'the eternal rice diet'⁵⁵⁴, lasted and affected their health in railway camps. In his memoirs, Tarumoto states that the POWs' dislike of rice resulted in losing their personal belongings. According to Tarumoto, although there was plenty of rice at the Matsutona Camp even during the rainy season of 1943, many POWs who disliked the rice diet bought local food such as fried bananas or buns at stands run by local people. Those who did not have cash traded their personal belongings for the food. Consequently, many POWs came to own only a set of clothes, going to work only with loincloth put on to save the set for sleeping.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, the POWs' life-style also undermined their health. Regarding the POWs' health problems, various physical and psychological factors were entangled in their complicated situations during the captivity.

Conclusion

Food and health are very closely related to each other. Here, a complex

⁵⁵³ Adrian Curlewis, 'Captain Adrian Curlewis, POW, Changi Prison Camp, Singapore' in *War On Our Door Step*, p.133.

⁵⁵⁴ George Aspinall, 'George Aspinall's Story' in Tim Bowden(ed), *The Changi Camera: A Unique Record of Changi and Thai-Burma Railway* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2012), p.195.

⁵⁵⁵ Tarumoto, p.193.

combination of various factors should be considered when the cause of the deterioration of the POWs' health condition is explicated. The IJA should be criticised for its lack of foresight in dealing with the diseases and the POWs' health problems in the jungle. Undoubtedly, the Japanese failed to supply the POWs with appropriate food and medicine, but, at least, they tried to stop the deterioration of the POWs' health conditions to the best of their ability. The memoirs and testimonies of ex-POWs and former Japanese servicemen show that the Japanese camp staff made efforts to provide the POWs with meat and vegetables. However, in the jungle, such supplies were often disturbed by the heavy and incessant rains during the rainy season.

A misfortune of the POWs was that there were cultural and constitutional gaps between the Japanese and the POWs. Thus, many POWs could not adapt to the Japanese way regarding food and medical treatments. The fact should be noted that the IJA soldiers craved rice, but the POWs disliked it. Here, the POWs were trapped in the gap between the different dietary cultures of the captor and the captive. The POWs had to face the sudden change of the staple diet from bread to rice. Consequently, many POWs had a disorder in their digestive system because of the unfamiliar diet. Moreover, there is a view that too much carbohydrate intake lowered the POWs' resistance to diseases. Furthermore, in the initial period of their captivity, some POWs intentionally avoided the rice diet because of its uncomfortable taste or other psychological reasons and lost their weight considerably. Thus, POW cooks had to learn how to cook rice properly. Even so, the POWs continued to have a negative image of the rice diet.

Combined with the IJA's inadequate food supplies, the POWs' physical and psychological difficulties in assimilating rice nutrients often resulted in the loss of physical strength and subsequent suffering from various diseases. In 1949, the Geneva Conventions for the treatment of POWs was amended. The new Article 29 stipulates the sufficiency of the basic food rations in quality, quantity and variety, introducing the concept of the 'habitual diet' of the POWs. Indeed, the POWs' health problems exemplified the cultural and constitutional differences between the captors and the captives.

Nevertheless, some POW groups along the railway had higher death rates than

others. Especially, groups called F and H Forces lost forty per cent of their men, which was twice as high as the POWs' average mortality along the railway. In the following chapters, what made such a large gap will be analysed.

Chapter 5: F Force's march

Introduction

F and H Forces were the most tragic POW parties on the railway, having a mortality of 40 per cent. Except for the two Forces, the POWs mortality on the railway was 16 per cent. Notably, the former figure took only nine months, whereas the latter three years. This chapter will explicate what made such a significant difference between F, H Forces and the other POW groups. At the same time, this chapter will ascertain how much the two Forces' tragedy influenced the POWs' public image on the railway. It will be found that the situation of F, H Forces was so disastrous that their image in the extreme had an enormous impact on the public and began to represent the whole image of the POWs on the railway. This 'F Force factor' was disseminated because of Colonel Cyril Wild, who had been an F Force officer and became a leading member of the war crimes investigation team after the war. Notably, Wild testified at the Tokyo Trial about the atrocity on the railway, which was reported worldwide. The following three chapters will discuss the 'F Force factor' and Wild's role.

F and H Forces

Firstly, it is necessary to explain why the two Forces were named F and H Forces. The Allied POW Headquarters at Changi, Singapore, called POW parties alphabetically in despatching them from Singapore to other places such as Burma, Thailand, Japan and Borneo. Below is the list of such parties and their destinations.⁵⁵⁶

Table.8: List of POW Forces dispatched from Singapore

⁵⁵⁶ See Yoshikawa, p116; Tim Bowden, 'The POW Experience', in *The Changi Camera*, p.38; for A Force, see Hugh V. Clarke, *A Life for Every Sleeper: A Pictorial Record of the Burma-Thailand Railway* (Sydney; London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp.xv-xvi; for G and H Forces, see Ronald Searle, *To the Kwai - and Back: War Drawings 1939-1945* (London: Souvenir, 2006), p.98.

Force	Strength	Destination	Date of Departure
A Force	3,000	Burma	14 May 1942
B Force	1,496	Borneo	8 July 1942
C Force	2,200	Japan	16 August 1942
D Force	5,000	Thailand	17 March 1943
E Force	1,000	Borneo	28 March 1943
F Force	7,000	Thailand	18-29 April 1943
G Force	1,500	Japan	26 April 1943
H Force	3,270	Thailand	15 May 1943
J Force	900	Japan	16 May 1943
K Force	235 (Medics)	Thailand	25 June 1943
L Force	115 (Medics)	Thailand	23 August 1943

As the table shows, A, D, F, H, K and L Forces were dispatched to Burma or Thailand. POWs, not included in the list, were directly sent to the railway camps from Java and Sumatra.

F Force was called by the Japanese the No.4 Group of the Malaya POW Camp or the Banno Force named after its commander, Lt. Colonel Hiroteru Banno. Along with the Japanese commander, F Force was under the command of Lt. Colonel S.W. Harris, R.A. In April 1943, F Force was dispatched to Thailand by train to reinforce the POW workforce in the Burma-Thailand border area. The party consisted of 7,000 British and Australian POWs, over 3,000 of whom died in the jungle. H Force was put in a similar situation with F Force with a little difference in departure date and destination. H Force was the No.5 Group of the Malaya POW Camp commanded by Major Hachisuka. In May 1943, the 3,000 men of H Force left Singapore by train; some 1,000 never returned. Thus, 4,000 out of 10,000 F and H Force POWs lost their lives on the railway. In this chapter, F Force will be focused on for its abundance of sources. The chapter will also deal with the forced march of F Force as it devastated the men's morale and physical strength.

F Force and Wild

Having worked in Japan for the Shell Oil Company before the war, Major Wild joined F Force as a senior interpreter for his Japanese language ability and knowledge about Japanese. Wild was famous for his role as an interpreter at General Perceval and General Yamashita's talk when the British surrendered. After the war, Colonel Wild joined the war crimes investigation team and interrogated war criminal suspects. Notably, Wild submitted his report on F Force entitled "Narrative of 'F' Force in Thailand, April-December 1943" to the British military authorities.⁵⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, Wild testified about the atrocities on the railway, which was reported sensationally by the press. Hence, his view based on his F Force experience could influence the views of the Allied military authorities and the public at that time.

Wild died in a plane crash in Hong Kong on 25 September 1946 after he testified in Tokyo. After Wild's death, James Bradley, who had been a British officer of F Force, published Wild's biography entitled *Cyril Wild: The Tall Man Who Never Slept*⁵⁵⁸ in 1991. The Japanese version was also published in 2001. Bradley is known as one of ten POWs who attempted to escape from the Sonkrai No.2 Camp on 5 July 1943. The attempt failed, and Bradley was one of four survivors who were caught by the Japanese. In 1982, based on his F Force experience, Bradley published his memoirs entitled *Towards the Setting Sun*. Thus, Bradley's works have considerably contributed to the formation of the public image of the Burma-Thailand Railway and the POWs' tragedy there.

Besides Wild, there was one more interpreter in F Force. John Stewart Ullmann, having been a corporal of the Intelligence Corps staff, the 18th Division HQ, started studying the Japanese language in Changi after the capitulation. Based on his notes taken during the Force's stay in Thailand from April to December 1943, Ullmann published in 1988 his memoirs *To the River Kwai: Two Journeys 1943, 1979*⁵⁵⁹, under the pseudonym of John Stewart. Besides, it is

⁵⁵⁷ James Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun: An Escape from the Thailand-Burma Railway, 1943* (London: Phillimore, 1982), p.43.

⁵⁵⁸ James Bradley, *Cyril Wild: The Tall Man Who Never Slept* (Fontwell: Woodfield, 1991).

⁵⁵⁹ John Stewart, *To the River Kwai: Two Journeys, 1943, 1979* (London:

intriguing that Ullmann worked as a technical adviser for David Lean during the shooting of the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Although the film does not represent F and H Forces' tragedy, Ullmann's influence in the mass media cannot be disregarded.

In 2012, Harold Atcherley, a comrade of Ullmann's in F Force, published his memoirs *Prisoner of Japan*⁵⁶⁰. Atcherley, a wartime intelligence officer of the 18th Division, was in the same camps with Ullmann. Also, Atcherley knew Wild and Bradley in the same Force. Notably, Atcherley states in his memoirs that Wild "provides an authoritative account of the ill-fated F Force."⁵⁶¹ Atcherley became an executive of the Shell Oil Company after the war.

Atcherley recollects that Colonel Andy Dillon, F Force's POW commandant at the Sonkrai No.2 Camp, submitted a report on F Force at the request of the *Kempeitai* when the Force was returning to Singapore in December 1943.⁵⁶² This fact implies that even the IJA authorities did not know what happened to F Force. Atcherley reproduced Dillon's 'F Force Notes' in his diary.⁵⁶³

Besides, it should be noted that the illustrations in Atcherley's book were drawn by Ronald Searle, a former member of H Force. After the capitulation of Singapore, Searle was the art editor of the POW's paper *Survivor*, published in the Changi camp.⁵⁶⁴ Searle became a famous illustrator and cartoonist after the war and published in 1986 his memoirs *To The Kwai – And Back: War Drawings 1939-1945*. Ullmann also mentions Searles' name in his memoirs.

F and H Force survivors' publications tend to draw more attention than other POWs' memoirs since the mass media prefer sensational stories to trivial or monotonous narratives. Thus, F and H Forces' horrible experience could confer their narratives more substantial influence on the public image than others.

Bloomsbury, 1988).

⁵⁶⁰ Harold Atcherley, *Prisoner of Japan: A Personal War Diary: Singapore, Siam and Burma, 1941-1945* (Cirencester: Memoirs, 2012).

⁵⁶¹ Atcherley, Kindle version, Location No.85.

⁵⁶² Dillon's report, 'Report on Prisoners of War in Thailand: May to December 1943' is in TNA PRO WO208/3258, 'History of "F" Force', Appendix 'A'.

⁵⁶³ Atcherley, Location No.1978.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., Location No.1751.

Notably, Wild has been referred to as a key person in the F Force narratives. Indeed, Wild, a leading war crimes investigator and interpreter, could considerably influence the views of prosecutors, judges and the press. Nevertheless, Wild's excessive role in the trials could lead to a credibility problem as no one could check his account. Thus, it is necessary to compare Wild's account with other sources and examine the 'Wild factor' in the railway narratives.

Forced March

F Force's plight was primarily attributed to their forced march from Ban Pong to the Thailand-Burma border area, covering over 300 km. It took 18-21 days, from late April to the middle of May 1943, to complete the journey. The Japanese official report states that the forced march was due to the lack of transport means: the river transport was not available since the water level was not high enough for boats to operate.⁵⁶⁵ In the region, the rainy season usually begins in May and continues until October. Thus, in April, the river's water level was below the boats' operation level, with the dry season ending.

The F Force men, divided into groups of 200 or 300, had to march for 20-25km a day in the night-time to avoid the sunshine in the daytime. Thus, they had to sleep in the jungle's clearings during the daytime with one-day rest given in every three days. Those who dropped by the wayside were sent to the nearest camp by lorries.

Notably, the same conditions were applied to the IJA's 31st Division, which started their march to Burma in the middle of April. Therefore, the Japanese official report concludes that:

In short, the forced march was made owing to unavoidable circumstances. Even the Japanese combat soldiers, who were in a hurry, made a forced march for over 400 km. It is not the case that only the POWs were forced to go on

⁵⁶⁵ JACAR, Ref.C14060167100(NIDS), Exhibit: Situation of F, H Forces' march in 'POW Use Situation in Line with Thai-Burmese Railway Construction: Investigation Report from June 1942 to October 1943', pp.0827-0829.

such a march.⁵⁶⁶

The F Force POWs seem to have recognised the IJA's 'unavoidable situation' as the IJA servicemen of F Force escaped the death penalty in their war crimes trial after the war. Commander Banno and six other Japanese were put on trial in Singapore from 25 September to 23 October 1946. Surprisingly, despite the worst mortality of all the POW groups, the sentences and the following confirmations conferred no death penalties to the accused. Notably, Banno received the sentence of three-year imprisonment.

Besides, it is notable that the prosecutor's opening address was utterly identical to Wild's report on F Force. The followings are the extracts from the two about the march.

The prosecutor's opening address:

The march of 300 kilometres which followed would have been arduous for fit troops in normal times. For this Force, burdened with its sick and short of food, it proved a trial of unparalleled severity.⁵⁶⁷

Wild's report:

The march of three hundred kilometres which followed would have been arduous for fit troops in normal times. For this Force, burdened with its sick and short of food, it proved a trial of unparalleled severity.⁵⁶⁸

It is no wonder that the prosecutor used Wild's report for the indictment as the investigation team submitted it. However, the identicalness of the two indicates that the prosecutor's account was entirely dependent on Wild's view.

Before departure

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., p.0829.

⁵⁶⁷ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.382.

⁵⁶⁸ Wild's report quoted in Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.44.

In the trial, the prosecutor argued that the Japanese had said to the POWs before their departure that they would be transferred to 'health-camps in a good climate'.⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, F Force included 2,000 unfit men. Also, Atcherley states that, early in April 1943, the Japanese informed them of the transfer to 'rest camps' in Thailand, where it would be easier to feed them; thus, the Japanese ordered to take 2,000 sick men.⁵⁷⁰

Did the Japanese really say such a thing as they would bring the POWs to the 'health camps'? The Japanese official report does not mention it. However, Hiroike states in his memoirs that he heard a rumour that Major General Arimura, the Commander of Malaya POW Camp Administration, had told F Force POWs that they would be transferred to a 'cooler retreat'.⁵⁷¹ Nevertheless, Hiroike adds that it is unknown whether it is true or not because there were no sources other than the rumour. At any rate, it was true that some POWs believed that they were going to the retreat in Thailand, bringing their piano with them. Undoubtedly, they did not expect the forced march. Eventually, the piano was abandoned at Ban Pong after detainment.

The Dillon report submitted to the *Kempeitai* states that, in early April 1943, the Japanese gave the POW headquarters in Singapore the following information regarding F Force's move by train.

- (a) The reason for the move was that the food situation in Singapore was difficult and would be far better in the new place.
- (b) This was NOT a working party.
- (c) As there were not 7,000 fit combatants in Changi, 30% of the party were to be men unfit to march or work. The unfit men would have a better chance of recovery with good food and in a pleasant hilly place with good facilities for recreation.
- (d) There would be no marching except for a short distance from the train to a near-by camp and transport would be provided for baggage and men unfit

⁵⁶⁹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.381.

⁵⁷⁰ Atcherley, Location No.179.

⁵⁷¹ Hiroike, p.301.

to march.

(e) Bands were to be taken.

(f) All tools and cooking gear and an engine and gear for electric light were to be taken.

(g) Gramophones, blankets, clothing and mosquito nets would be issued at the new camps.

(h) A good canteen would be available in each camp after three weeks. Canteen supplies for the first three weeks were to be bought with prisoners' money before leaving Singapore.

(i) The party would include a medical party of about 350 with equipment for a central hospital of 400 patients and medical supplies for three months.⁵⁷²

It seems that the IJA told a lie to make the POW authorities agree to send sick men to Thailand. Thus, the F Force men never expected any hard labour or long march in the jungle until they arrived at Ban Pong. Nevertheless, it is still unknown whose idea it was to deceive the POWs.

According to Atcherley's diary, as of 21 April 1943, F Force men were not yet informed of their destination, although they knew that they would be moving before long as rumours circulated among them.⁵⁷³ Moreover, the men became aware of their movement coming soon, judging by other Forces' movement from Singapore and their own inoculation against diseases. Notably, in Singapore, the Japanese examined POWs' rectums for dysentery and inoculated them against cholera and plague. Atcherley states in his diary dated 16 April 1943 that:

Last Monday we all had our backsides prodded for the third time. Now we are to be inoculated against cholera and plague, and some of us have already had the first dose of serum.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² TNA PRO WO208/3258, Dillon report, 'Report on Prisoners of War in Thailand: May to December 1943'. Appendix 'A' to 'History of "F" Force', p.1; Also, see Atcherley, Location No.1978; Bradley, *Cyril Wild*. p.38.

⁵⁷³ Atcherley, Location No.1917.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., Location No.1909.

His diary dated 21 April 1943 states that:

I have now been inoculated four times, twice for cholera and twice for plague.
I was also vaccinated but it shows no signs of taking yet.⁵⁷⁵

It is unknown whether the inoculations were given to all the men of F Force. Judging from the fact that cholera killed many of F Force, there is a possibility that some of the men did not receive the full inoculations. In fact, this issue became a point of dispute at the trial, which will be discussed later. It is notable that the Force saw two important events prior to their departure – the IJA's lie and their inoculation. The former is a well-known episode; on the other hand, the latter remains little known.

Departure

F Force entrained at Singapore in thirteen separate groups at one-day intervals. The train journey continued four or five days to Thailand, and in each truck, twenty-seven men were on board. On 18 April 1943, F Force's first group left Singapore. In their memoirs, both Ullmann and Bradley state that on 18 April, the Force got moving to Thailand. Also, Atcherley wrote in his diary dated 21 April that F Force Australians started the movement the previous Sunday, that is, 18 April. The Australians left amid a tropical storm, which made them soaked before their departure.⁵⁷⁶

On 21 April, shortly after the entry in the diary, Atcherley entrained as one of 660 trainloads.⁵⁷⁷ Ullmann states that he left Singapore three or four days after the first party.⁵⁷⁸ Bradley got on the train on 24 April. Staff Sergeant G.G. Rickwood, who testified in the trial of Banno and six others, had belonged to the No.5 Group of F Force. His party, consisting of 600 POWs, left Singapore on 23

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., Location No.1916.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., Location No.1919.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., Location No.1924.

⁵⁷⁸ Stewart, p.50.

April and arrived at Ban Pong on 28 April.⁵⁷⁹ These departing dates will become crucial later.

Arrival at Ban Pong

Atcherley states in his memoirs that “it was only after our arrival in Thailand that we learned the truth - we were to work on the construction of the Burma-Siam railway.”⁵⁸⁰ Furthermore, the F Force men were to walk for 300km to the construction site. In the trial, the prosecutor claimed that “As each party arrived at BAMPONG it learnt that the Force was faced with a march of indefinite length as no transport was available.”⁵⁸¹ Indeed, F Force men had no choice but to leave three-quarters of their medical stores at Ban Pong to carry out the march. Here, some questions arise about whether the Japanese thought of the march as a reasonable way in the construction’s rush-work period and why no transport was available from Ban Pong. The POWs did not know the answers, but the Japanese did.

According to Hiroike, the shortening of the construction period caused an inundation of the construction materials along with goods and food for the POW camps. Although the railway transport was operational when the inundation began in March and April 1943, only a little capacity was available for additional transports as of May. In June and July, railway transport became available for the POWs due to river transport's resumption, which was suspended during the first few months of the monsoon.⁵⁸² Notably, as mentioned in Chapter 3, in May, the Japanese chose to transport local labourers by train from Ban Pong to Wanyai (124km point) because the labourers and their families, without their administrative organisation and discipline, were not capable of such a long march.⁵⁸³

Lorries were another possible means of transport as the rainy season was not

⁵⁷⁹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood’s testimony, p.393.

⁵⁸⁰ Atcherley, Location No.180.

⁵⁸¹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution’s opening address, p.382.

⁵⁸² Hiroike, p.239.

⁵⁸³ Hiroike, pp.238-9

full-blown in April and May. Thus, early in March, before the departure, F Force's Japanese Command under the Malaya POW Camp requested the Railway Corps Command in Thailand to transport the F Force men by lorries. The answer was positive. At that time, the Railway Corps Command was supposed to receive two additional lorry-transport companies from the Southern Army in April. However, the lorries arrived at Ban Pong in June.⁵⁸⁴ Hiroike reveals this fact in his memoirs by referring to the No.2 Camp's record and memoranda written by the Railway Corps members. This is the background of the prosecutor's claim that 'no transport was available'.

Here, it is possible to draw an inference that the situation of 'no transport available' was caused by *inzu-shugi*. As the IJA's corrupt practice often prioritised nominal numbers of goods over substantial usability, broken lorries could be counted as record numbers. However, they could not be used in reality. The lorries were not the only problem at Ban Pong. In the trial, Rickwood testified about what he saw on arrival at Ban Pong as follows:

Yes, they were trying to line us up, giving us numbers. There was the language difficulty. People never understood what they wanted and he was hitting men into place with the golf club.⁵⁸⁵

This testimony corresponds to Ullmann's recollection that a sadistic Korean guard held a golf club in his right hand at all times.⁵⁸⁶

Beginning 300km march

Rickwood testified that his party left Ban Pong a few hours later from their arrival and started to march at night from 8.30 pm to 9.00 am the following day.⁵⁸⁷ However, it seems unrealistic that they left Ban Pong a few hours after the arrival. Other memoirs and reports commonly mention that the men were given a day rest

⁵⁸⁴ Hiroike, p.240.

⁵⁸⁵ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.394.

⁵⁸⁶ Stewart, p.56.

⁵⁸⁷ Rickwood's testimony, p.394.

between their arrival at Ban Pong and their departure. Atcherley states in his diary that on their arrival at Ban Pong, the Japanese told them that they would be leaving the following evening on a 300-kilometre march up to a camp just south of the Burma border.⁵⁸⁸ Bradley also recollects that they were given one night's rest before setting out on the march.⁵⁸⁹ Moreover, a Japanese report on an F Force party states that after four days and nights journey by train, the party arrived at Ban Pong and set out on the march after the rest of a whole day and night; the march was carried out only night-time.⁵⁹⁰ Thus, it is reasonable that the Japanese gave a whole day and night rest to the F Force men after their arrival at Ban Pong before leaving for the 300km march. Rickwood testified that soon after the Force started the march, the rainy season became earnest, which rapidly deteriorated their physical conditions.⁵⁹¹

Ullmann had a different experience from other F Force men as he, as an interpreter, was with the POW Command of F Force. Ullmann's narrative is noteworthy because it cannot be seen in the officers' or Wild's account, which became predominant through the war crimes trials owing to Wild's role. Besides, except for Wild, Ullmann was the only POW who could talk directly with the Japanese.

Ullmann recollects that as a part of the Force Command, he could take a truck with "incredible privilege of not being on foot like everyone else, carrying a heavy pack".⁵⁹² Commander Harris, with his headquarters' officers, left Ban Pong by truck. As Wild went with Harris, Ullmann became the interpreter for Rear-headquarters and remained in Ban Pong for a while to supervise the trainloads arriving from Singapore.⁵⁹³

In Ban Pong, according to Ullmann, F Force had to leave their most valuable belongings to be stored in a building by the station. Commander Banno assured

⁵⁸⁸ Atcherley, Location No.187.

⁵⁸⁹ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.43.

⁵⁹⁰ Hiroike, p.328.

⁵⁹¹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.383.

⁵⁹² Stewart, p.58.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

that the Japanese would send food, clothing and medicines up to Nieke, the base camp of F force up-country.⁵⁹⁴ In the trial, Banno testified that except for large, heavy 'unnecessary things' such as a piano, large pinewood desks and musical instruments, the Japanese sent up-country the POWs' belongings, especially medical stores immediately.⁵⁹⁵ It is no wonder that the POWs who had left Ban Pong earlier did not know what became of the items they left behind.

Some POWs sold their belongings to local Thais. Regarding the selling, Captain Laird recollects as follows:

So, many of our possessions had to be ditched – mainly by selling them to the Thais, but prices not good as several parties had gone through ahead of us and it was not a seller's market.⁵⁹⁶

However, the Dillon report only states that "All kit that men and officers could not carry was to be dumped at Bampong. This amounted to the equivalent of about 15 railway truckloads of stores and baggage."⁵⁹⁷ The arrangement made by the Japanese and the POWs' selling of items to the Thais were not mentioned in the Dillon report. Besides, the prosecutor's opening address, or Wild's report, states as follows:

Consequently, all the heavy equipment of the Force, including hospital equipment, medical supplies, tools and cooking gear, and all personal kit which could not be carried on the man, had to be abandoned in an unguarded dump at BAMPONG. Practically the whole of this material (including three-quarters of the medical stores) was lost to the Force throughout the 8 months spent up-country, as the immediate advent of the monsoon (at the usual season) prevented the Japanese from moving more than a negligible

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ TNA: PRO, WO 235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.139.

⁵⁹⁶ Richard Liard, 'Private Papers of Captain R. Laird', IWM, Documents.13873, p.84.

⁵⁹⁷ Dillon report, p.2.

proportion of it by lorry.⁵⁹⁸

The prosecutor's or Wild's argument omitted some facts as the Dillon report did – the POWs' selling and the transport arrangement by the Japanese. Thus, a question arises about whether Wild and Dillon, having left Ban Pong with the front Headquarters, could see what happened to the POWs' belongings left behind.

Nevertheless, unlike the headquarters officers, F Force men did their best to carry as many items as possible for the 300km march. George Aspinall, an Australian POW, states in his memoirs as follows:

We had to leave most of our stuff behind, including a lot of medical supplies, and we never saw it again. Apart from our personal gear, we had to carry the cooking utensils which included metal *kwalis* – big shallow iron pots for cooking rice. We also carried some emergency rations we had brought from Singapore. We only had what we could carry.⁵⁹⁹

The Rear-Headquarters of F Force left Ban Pong two weeks later, led by Lt. Colonel Huston, the chief medical officer, and three majors and interpreter Ullmann. The party got on a truck and left for Nieke at 10 am, 7 May 1943.⁶⁰⁰ The truck was loaded with large trunks, which contained the only medical supplies that would reach the camps on the Burma-Thailand border.⁶⁰¹ According to Banno, F Force was provided with eight lorries and one ambulance by the Railway Corps.⁶⁰² The lorries carried blankets, mosquito nets, necessary things for the hut accommodation and kitchen utensils for both POWs and Japanese.⁶⁰³

Moreover, Banno testified that when leaving Ban Pong, he visually confirmed that a large amount of baggage left behind was being kept in two large store-

⁵⁹⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.382; Wild's report in Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.47.

⁵⁹⁹ Aspinall, p.185.

⁶⁰⁰ Stewart, p.58.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., p.59.

⁶⁰² TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.121.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p.122.

houses and guarded by a Japanese Supply NCO.⁶⁰⁴ However, that is not all. According to Ullmann, who left Ban Pong latest, no sooner had his party left for the next base camp, Kanchanaburi, than local Thais' 'splendid looting party got under ways' in Ban Pong. Thus, the F Force men left behind joined the Japanese to guard the stores.⁶⁰⁵ Presumably, the men left behind were the sick because those who were too sick with dysentery or malaria to move remained at Ban Pong to join the Force later.⁶⁰⁶

In fact, the ruthlessness of the local Thais targeting F Force men's belongings during the march is often mentioned in the POWs' memoirs. Even the prosecutor states in the trial that "stragglers were set upon and looted by marauding Thais."⁶⁰⁷ Also, Rickwood testified that Thais had attacked the baggage convoy on the way of march, and thus the men had lost their kits.⁶⁰⁸

Kanchanaburi

When arriving at Kanchanaburi, the Rear-Headquarters had to wait for the arrival of Banno, who was to take the lead from there.⁶⁰⁹ Again sick men were left in this camp. Ullmann mentions that more than a hundred men were left in Kanchanaburi due to their difficulties in continuing the march.⁶¹⁰ Also, Atcherley states that after two stages of fifteen-mile marches from Ban Pong, he arrived in Kanchanaburi, where sick men had to be left, and a few men got a lift on a lorry with their kit.⁶¹¹ Thus, Kanchanaburi was functioning as a base camp. Nevertheless, its condition was not ideal in providing the men with relief. Bradley mentions that water was so short even in Kanchanaburi that F Force men had to buy drinking water there.⁶¹² The recollection of Bradley corresponds to

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., p.121.

⁶⁰⁵ Stewart, p.59.

⁶⁰⁶ Aspinall, op. cit., p.185.

⁶⁰⁷ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.383.

⁶⁰⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.396.

⁶⁰⁹ Stewart, p.61.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., p.65.

⁶¹¹ Atcherley, Location No.1934.

⁶¹² Bradley, *Towards the setting sun*, p.45.

Atcherley's diary stating that "Water was short and at Kanchanaburi had to be bought for 5 cents per bucket."⁶¹³ The Dillon report states that "Water was short at many camps and at Kanburi drinking water had to be bought by the prisoners from a privately owned well. Col. Harris protested but the matter was not put right."⁶¹⁴ At that time, the Japanese strongly prohibited the POWs and the labourers from drinking unboiled water to prevent disease infections. Thus, presumably, local Thais came to the camp to sell the drinking water demanded.

Banno testified about what he had done in Kanchanaburi. On 7 May 1943, Banno left Ban Pong and arrived at Kanchanaburi, where he met Major General Takasaki, the Commander of the Railway Corps, and asked why the use of lorries was refused and why the POWs had to march for such a long distance. Takasaki answered that the trucks were not available because so many were broken. Then, Banno asked whether the railway running up to Wanyai was available. Takasaki's answer was negative because the line was so busy and dangerous as there had been many accidents. Next, Banno requested more stops between the staging camps during the march. However, Takasaki refused for the reason that they had no time to spare until completing the railway by the end of August as the IHQ set the new construction deadline. Takasaki added that the accommodation was already made in camps, and there was no need to worry about it. Furthermore, Takasaki instructed Banno to get to Tamaran Pat as soon as possible and report to the 5th Railway Regiment Commander there and receive orders regarding the work assigned to the F Force groups. Thus, the following day, on 8 May 1943, Banno left Kanchanaburi in a hurry.⁶¹⁵ Banno's testimony corresponds to Hiroike's account of the lorries' unavailability.

March at night

The difficulty of the 300km march came from not only its length but also its time of day. The Japanese ordered F Force to march at night to avoid the heat of the tropical sunshine. As another reason for the night-march, Atcherley suggests that

⁶¹³ Atcherley, Location No.1993.

⁶¹⁴ Dillon report, p.2.

⁶¹⁵ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, pp.109-110.

it might be because the IJA reinforcements used the track during the daytime heading for the Burma front. Having seen the Japanese soldiers marching, Atcherley states that: “We could only watch with awe as they manhandled their guns and heavy equipment under conditions little better than our own.”⁶¹⁶ Atcherley’s recollection corresponds to the Japanese report stating that Japanese soldiers also had to march to Burma.

The problem of the night-march was that it made walking difficult and thus caused scars and wounds on the POWs’ bodies. Laird states that:

[F]rom now on we were on an unmade-up track and in the dark it was impossible to avoid the roughness of the track, which resulted in many cuts and bruises which later developed into tropical ulcers.⁶¹⁷

Combined with vitamin deficiency, tropical ulcer became a severe threat to POWs health. Also, the night-time march brought about difficulty in sleeping. The high temperature in the daytime hampered the men’s sleep. Rickwood testified that the hot temperature of the daytime and the paucity of trees to make shade made their sleep difficult.⁶¹⁸ Besides, Laird describes in his memoirs how difficult for them to have a rest after the march:

We normally started our march at dusk and would arrive soon after daylight at the next staging camp (bivouac). All too often we were kept on parade all morning – sometimes up to 12 Noon – frequently in full sun – to allow stragglers to catch up and for the Nips to get their figures right. All the end of that we had no more than a few hours before we were due to move out again in the evening and during this time we had to get what food we could (generally rice with a thin vegetable stew) and fit in a few hours rest.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Atcherley, Location No.190.

⁶¹⁷ Laird, p.84

⁶¹⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood’s testimony, p.396.

⁶¹⁹ Laird, p.85.

A similar complaint was made by Aspinall, stating that “We tried to get some sleep during the day, but it was usually impossible because the Japanese always wanted to have *tenko* – a check parade.”⁶²⁰ Here again, *inzu-shugi* caused the deterioration of the men’s physical conditions.

Tarsao Camp

On 8 May, towards 6 pm, the rear Headquarters arrived at the Tarsao Camp (130km), which had been the main supply base for the railway construction. Ullmann saw hundreds of huts, tents and workshops there and spent the night with the Japanese drivers, who shared foods and liquor with the POWs.⁶²¹ To Ullmann’s surprise, at Tarsao, the rear Headquarters encountered the F Force Command led by Harris. The reason why Harris and his entourage were ordered to stay there was unknown to the British.⁶²²

At this camp, Ullmann saw for the first time columns of men who were unfit and undernourished for the forced march. Then, Ullmann witnessed the scene as follows:

Evening fell and the men of No.7 Train arrived, depleted in numbers, strung out and exhausted. Colonel Banno stood by, watching them. A prisoner staggered and fell unconscious at his feet. Banno, visibly upset, called for Colonel Huston, our chief medical officer. He had, he said with emotion in his voice, the greatest concern for the health of the prisoners under his care. Well, he was told, his concern was appreciated, but how could we alleviate their suffering? It was up to the Japanese to supply food and medicine, and to cut down the forced marches.⁶²³

Indeed, Huston could do nothing for the sick at this point, but at the same time, neither could the Japanese do anything without sufficient transport means. Then,

⁶²⁰ Aspinall, pp.185-6.

⁶²¹ Stewart, p.65.

⁶²² Ibid., p.67.

⁶²³ Ibid.

according to Ullmann, Banno ordered the rear Headquarters, to which Huston, Ullmann and medical stores belonged, to proceed their way. It was because Banno thought that the advance party of F Force should need medical attention. However, the order made the main Headquarters' officers outraged: "what, allow *rear* H.Q. to take the lead?"⁶²⁴ Despite Wild's appeal to Banno, only Harris was allowed to join Banno and the rear Headquarters. Nevertheless, Ullmann saw the palaver continuing, 'producing endless orders and counter-orders'. Ullmann comments on this scene as follows:

Whatever the merits of the case, for the wartime soldiers watching the professionals of both camps slogging it out, motivated by what we saw as military pique, the situation was at the same time comical and infuriating.⁶²⁵

When Bradley's party arrived at the Tarsao camp on the sixth day of their march, they were given one-day rest as Tarsao was the resting camp after Kanchanaburi. At Tarsao, an incident happened, in which Wild got involved. Bradley states that, at the camp, Wild and Major Bruce Hunt, Australian doctor, were severely beaten up by the Japanese when they insisted that thirty-six men should be left at the camp for illness. Bradley continues that "The doctor's hand was broken. The men were made to continue with their party, and most of them died shortly afterwards."⁶²⁶ In his memoirs, Bradley does not mention how and why they were beaten up and by whom. However, Bradley describes the incident in detail in Wild's biography, published ten years after the memoirs. According to the biography, the Japanese medical officer agreed that thirty-six men could not march further and issued a written order to a Japanese corporal in charge of the camp to this effect. However, the corporal refused the order, and thus Wild and Hunt protested strongly. Consequently, Wild and Hunt were beaten up by the Japanese corporal. In the end, the corporal allowed a few men to remain in the

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, pp.46-7.

camp.⁶²⁷ Regarding this incident, Hunt states that:

At the time scheduled for parade I fell in the 37 severely ill men apart from the main parade. Major Wild and I stood in front of them. The corporal approached with a large bamboo in his hand and spoke menacingly to Major Wild, who answered him quietly. The corporal's reply was to hit Major Wild in the face. Another guard followed suit and, as Major Wild staggered back, the corporal thrust at his genitalia with his bamboo. One guard tripped me while two others pushed me to the ground. The three then set about me with bamboos, causing extensive bruising of skull, back, hands and arms and fractured 5th metacarpal bone.⁶²⁸

A question arises about why the Japanese corporal did not allow the sick men to remain at the camp, although sick men had been left at Ban Pong and Kanchanaburi. Also, it is quite surprising that the corporal refused the medical officer's order without any reason. Although Wild's report mentions nothing about this incident, the Dillon report, which Wild co-authored, states as follows:

No proper arrangements existed for retaining sick at these Camps and men who were absolutely unfit to march (owing to disease and weakness) were beaten and driven from camp to camp. Officers, including medical officers, who begged and prayed for sick men to be left behind were themselves beaten at many camps. In one particular case a Japanese medical officer (Lieutenant) ordered the IJA corporal in charge of Tarso staging camp to leave 36 sick men behind as they were too ill to move. The corporal refused to obey this order, although it was repeated in writing, and a British officer interpreter (Major) and an Australian doctor (Major) were severely beaten when they protested. A bone in the doctor's hand was broken. Of these sick men who were compelled to march nearly all have since died, including an Australian chaplain who died at the next camp. (The Japanese medical officer had

⁶²⁷ Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, pp.47-8.

⁶²⁸ Bruce Hunt's statement in Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.48.

particularly said that the chaplain should not march as he was an elderly man with a weak heart and was already at the end of his strength).⁶²⁹

The Dillon report does not mention the fact that the corporal allowed some POWs to remain in the camp. The corporal might have been ordered not to retain sick POWs due to the lack of proper arrangements for them. Indeed, in these staging camps, no medical treatments could be expected. Thus, Banno decided to provide the POWs with medical treatment at Kanyu.

First Aid Post at Kanyu

After proceeding fifteen miles from Tarsao, the rear Headquarters' leading truck stopped in a clearing, which was the place called Kanyu (162km). Here, Banno told the rear Headquarters that the Japanese and the British commanders should ride to Nieke, F Force's base camp, and the rest were to unload medical supplies there and attend the men who would be passing through. Here again, the British officers tried to persuade Banno to rescind the order because they thought the plan was nonsensical as most surgical supplies were contained in the trunks. However, Banno persisted in his idea of the First Aid Post at Kanyu.⁶³⁰

Whatever the First Aid Post's merits were, it is fair to say that the Japanese image of total negligence regarding the POWs' medical attention is quite different from what Ullmann witnessed there. Without the First Aid Post at the half-distance point of the march, F Force men's conditions might have been much worsened in the end.

About this incident, Banno himself testified that, on the way to Tamaran Pat from Kanchanaburi, he had found so many F Force men left behind that he took the POW medical officer and the medical supplies to Kanyu and ordered to build a hospital. Moreover, Banno explained why he chose Kanyu as the hospital camp as follows:

The reason was, for my experience in the army, when we had a night march

⁶²⁹ Dillon report, p.2.

⁶³⁰ Stewart, pp.67-8.

during the summer I found that those who dropped out in the first half were not so serious, but those who dropped out in the second half were very dangerous. So I made arrangements to do the Hospital at KANYU, so that we could look after the Ps.O.W. condition at this place and see to the more serious cases after KANYU. I heard that there was some protest the effect that I took them to KANYU, but judging from the conditions at KANYU they had good water there and that there was a Branch of the Commissariat and also they had hut accommodation. Therefore, I considered this was the best place. I still believe that my arrangement was the best of the whole situation.⁶³¹

According to Ullmann, at Kanyu, a Japanese corporal, the commandant of the Japanese detachment, ordered the British to set up a hospital and a cookhouse with the help of some British and Australians from a nearby camp.⁶³² Ullmann states that, at Kanyu, the Japanese corporal and his men gave no trouble to the POWs; on the contrary, they went out of their way to please the POWs. For instance, the Japanese took them to hot springs by the river banks about five miles away from Kanyu, and the Japanese and the British enjoyed bathing together.⁶³³

On 23 May 1943, Ullmann and two majors left Kanyu. As the party had no transport means, their medical supplies were left behind with dozen sick men, Huston and Major Agnew, who had suppurating feet.⁶³⁴ In his trial, Banno testified about what became of the POWs and their medical supplies dropped off at Kanyu as follows:

When this march was complete, I ordered that Capt. Yamada should go back with four trucks to bring up those POW patients who had dropped off on the way, and at that time I also ordered that the POW Dr and the medical supplies

⁶³¹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, pp.484-5.

⁶³² Stewart, p.68.

⁶³³ Ibid., p.69.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

at KANYU should be brought up with them.⁶³⁵

Huston and the medical supplies arrived at Nieke on 12 or 13 June amid the rainy season by boat.⁶³⁶ Their delayed arrival might have put the other officers under the mistaken impression that the medical supplies did not reach the Force.

Kinsaiyok Camp

When Ullmann passed Kinsaiyok Camp (172km), where several thousand POWs were housed, some fifty British and Australian F force men, who had dropped out of their parties before, resumed the march as they were now fit enough. At this camp, Ullmann heard of cholera for the first time. Regarding the disease, Ullmann recalls a quarrel between the British and the Australians in F Force about who was responsible for the spread.

Those responsible for its spread to F Force, said the British, were the devil-may-care, irresponsible Aussies who drank the river water even though they'd been warned against it. The Aussies blamed the Poms who were filthy, who never washed.⁶³⁷

The quarrel between the British and the Australians seems to be in contrast to what Wild claims in his report: the cholera outbreak was 'directly attributable to the criminal negligence of the Japanese.'⁶³⁸ In fact, the Japanese took necessary measures to deal with the disease, although they were inconvenient for the POWs. Bradley states that "'F' Force trudged past Kinsaiyok, 172kms., for days, but were not allowed to enter the camp because cholera was already an epidemic there."⁶³⁹

After Kinsaiyok

⁶³⁵ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.504.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., p.506.

⁶³⁷ Stewart, p.71.

⁶³⁸ Wild's report in Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.49.

⁶³⁹ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.48.

After Kinsaiyok, the road was an old elephant path. As the rainy season began in earnest, the path became a stream of mud in which men sank halfway to their knees.⁶⁴⁰ Thus, when Ullmann's party arrived at Wamping or Kui Ye, the rations were down to a little rice and a few pieces of salted fish once a day. Ullmann recollects that the Japanese were "helpful and sympathetic, but unable to provide anything but words."⁶⁴¹ The party left Wamping on 27 May 1943, picking up additional sick men who had been left behind. At midday, the party stopped by a small Japanese camp on the river and received hot water and food – a rice ball with pickled plum inside. Also, a surprise was given by the Japanese. Ullmann states that "Then, with their inexplicable and sudden urge to please us, the guards took us to the local hot springs. [...] The effect was incredibly invigorating."⁶⁴² The hot spring is presumed to be the well-known Hindat hot spring as Hindat was the staging next to Wamping. Bradley also states that his party took a rest and enjoyed the hot spring near the river at Hindat.⁶⁴³

At Prang Kassi, Ullmann saw a Japanese corporal with 'Hitler-moustache'. Although blows fell on them without reasons, they received an excellent stew there.⁶⁴⁴ After Ullmann's party left Prang Kassi, the monsoon conditions got worse. Ullmann states that "Streams overflowed their banks and had to be waded. Feet rotted. Dysentery dissolved our bowels and our skin was chafed raw."⁶⁴⁵

At Tha-Khanun, the rations were to be reduced by half because of the scarcity. There was a Japanese wearing white gloves in this camp. Ullmann recollects that the white-gloved Japanese hit POWs when not satisfied with their attitudes. However, he allowed extra rice for those whom he approved of. Thus, the POWs came to behave like they were 'perfect soldiers'. For Ullmann, the image of the white-gloved Japanese was that of 'the perfect little soldier'.⁶⁴⁶

After Ullmann's party left Tha-Khanun, a Japanese infantry company overtook

⁶⁴⁰ Stewart, p.76.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Ibid., p.77.

⁶⁴³ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.49.

⁶⁴⁴ Stewart, p.77.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p.78.

them. Seeing the Japanese moving at twice the POWs' speed on foot, the POWs said that "Better be a prisoner of the Nips than be in the Nip army."⁶⁴⁷

According to Ullmann, the march between Tha-Khanun and Tamuron Pat was the hardest, and the party saw cholera villages on the way. Although Tamuron Pat was a small tented camp, the monsoon made it large parking for some eighty immobilised trucks. In short, the road was impassable. Ullmann states that the Japanese were helpful, and the rations improved in this camp, where the party stayed for four days. During their stay in the camp, two men died of dysentery and were buried in the jungle. Moreover, for a cholera prevention measure, Japanese medical orderlies administered prophylactic injections to the POWs.⁶⁴⁸

On 3 June 1943, Ullmann's party left Tamuron Pat, led by a Japanese officer. Their morale and the track conditions deteriorated considerably. To deal with the situations, the POW officers of the group "used threats and encouragements to urge on the men who were weakening."⁶⁴⁹ In the last extremity, the party carried such weaken men on the stretchers 'along with six-gallon cooking pots, shovels, medical supplies and sodden kits'.⁶⁵⁰

Konkoita Camp

The Konkoita Camp (262km) was the third staging-camp from the last. Notably, cholera broke out from labourer's huts and spread in the camp. The Dillon report states that "At Konkoita the marching parties were quartered in the same camp as a Thai labour corps, who were suffering from cholera. The infection was picked up by each of the thirteen parties of marching prisoners."⁶⁵¹ Also, Rickwood testified that he saw first cholera in the Konkoita camp, where the F Force men were put in huts alongside the local labourers'. Despite the labourers' unsanitary conditions, the distance between the POWs' huts and the labourers' was not more than five yards. Rickwood also testified that their medical officer told them that

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.79-80.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., p.81.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p.83.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.,

⁶⁵¹ Dillon report, p.2.

cholera was the matter with the labourers.⁶⁵² Similarly, Wild's report states that:

For at Konkuita, the last staging-camp but two, every one of the thirteen marching parties was forced to camp, for one or more days within a few yards of huts filled with hundreds of cholera stricken coolies, on ground covered with infected faeces, where the air was black with flies.⁶⁵³

Bradley recollects that his party stayed for a day at Konkoita, where the labourer's camp was almost adjoining the POWs' camp.⁶⁵⁴ Probably, Bradley became a cholera carrier there.

On 5 June 1943, Ullmann's party arrived at Konkoita with eight sick men carried. However, on their arrival, the camp was being evacuated for the shortage of food. As the Thai side supplies were cut entirely, the camp decided to move further north hoping for supplies from Burma.⁶⁵⁵ Towards 7 pm, the party arrived at Lower Nieke, F Force's first base camp, where Ullmann joined his colleagues.⁶⁵⁶

Lower Nieke

F Force had five base camps: Lower Nieke; Nieke Proper; Lower Sonkrai; Sonkrai No.2; and Upper Sonkrai. Lower Nieke was F Force's southernmost camp, and Upper Sonkrai was the most up-country base camp in Thailand.

On 15 or 16 May 1943, Cholera broke out at Lower Nieke. The Japanese record states that, on 16 May, the outbreak started at an adjoining hut of labourers in the Lower Nieke Camp, killing six labourers in three days.⁶⁵⁷ According to the Dillon report, it was on 15 May when cholera broke out at Lower Nieke. Then, Harris suggested to Banno that all the movement of F Force should cease, but the Japanese rejected the suggestion. The Dillon report regards this rejection as the

⁶⁵² TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.395.

⁶⁵³ Wild's report, op. cit., p.49.

⁶⁵⁴ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.49.

⁶⁵⁵ Stewart, p.85.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., p.86.

⁶⁵⁷ Hiroike, p.328.

cause of cholera spread to all F Force camps.⁶⁵⁸ In the trial, Banno explained the decision he had made there. This matter will be discussed in the next chapter.

Rickwood's party, which had been in the front or the second, arrived at Lower Nieke presumably before the cholera outbreak. Thus, Rickwood testified in the court that in Lower Nieke, malaria broke out among the F Force men, and in his battalion, six men contracted the disease. They stayed at Lower Nieke for two or three days. At that time, the shortage of water was the main problem in the camp.⁶⁵⁹

Ullmann's party was the last to arrive at Lower Nieke from the First Aid Post at Kanyu. When the group reached Lower Nieke, Commander Harris came to greet them and informed them that the camp was about to be evacuated in forty-eight hours to Nieke Proper across the river. The evacuation was decided because the cholera outbreak caused many deaths, and the flood of the river would bring no chance of receiving supplies for long.⁶⁶⁰

Nieke Proper

The Nieke Proper camp, the final destination of Ullmann's group, was only two miles across the river. It was the main base for the seven F Force camps, which dispersed over a seventeen miles stretch. Ullmann recollects that there were already approximately 600 British and Australian POWs in Nieke Proper and describes them as follows: "Elementary notions of solidarity and mutual help had largely vanished. Survival was equated with theft."⁶⁶¹ There Ullmann saw Colonel Dillon address the men as follows:

Dogs![...] You complain of being treated like dogs by your own officers! Well, it may be so, but I didn't imagine that British soldiers could behave the way you do. Yes, you'll probably say the Japs are responsible. But I'll let you have it straight out: I've never seen such scum of the earth as I see here assembled

⁶⁵⁸ Dillon report, p.2.

⁶⁵⁹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.395.

⁶⁶⁰ Stewart, p.90.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

in Nikki. I never thought that such scoundrels could come out of England. And I hate to think that I deliberately sacrificed my freedom in Sumatra for the likes of you! [...] Now, you tell me, are we going to let these bastards think that the white man, even in defeat, behaves like an animal?⁶⁶²

Dillon's address successfully ameliorated their morale. Nevertheless, this fact implies that the POWs were partly responsible for deteriorating the camp conditions.

When Ullmann arrived at the camp, the railway work was suspended because of the scarcity of fit men. Hence, only a small party went out to maintain the road.⁶⁶³ Nevertheless, the death toll was rising. On 9 June 1943, the commandant of the Sonkrai No.2 Camp, the main camp for the British, sent for Ullmann because the state there was '*taihen*, bloody terrible', and thus, Ullmann left Nieke Proper after only four days. Banno sent him off and ordered two Korean guards, Ullmann's escorts, to carry all his kit and take good care of him.⁶⁶⁴

Lower Sonkrai

Lower Sonkrai was the main camp of the Australians of F Force. At that time, the camp commandant was Lieutenant Fukuda. Ullmann describes the camp's condition as follows: "The camp was neatly kept, the latrines covered, and sanitation well enforced."⁶⁶⁵ However, as of 9 June 1943, the number of deaths from cholera and dysentery were already over one hundred.⁶⁶⁶ The cholera patients' burial ground was a hill beyond the campsite, which was called Cholera Hill.

Aspinall, an Australian POW who stayed at Lower Sonkrai for five months, describes the camp's situation on his arrival as follows:

⁶⁶² Ibid., p.91.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., p.92.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

What we found was a filthy, stinking, sodden camp that had been occupied by Indian Tamils.[...] the so-called latrines were brimming over with water and flowing down the hill towards the camp, and huge shiny green blowflies were buzzing about.⁶⁶⁷

Presumably, the Australians transformed the filthy camp into the clean and neat one by the time Ullmann arrived. The Australians' hygiene-conscious character will be explained later.

Rickwood's party was the first to arrive at Lower Sonkrai, where their march ended.⁶⁶⁸ The party arrived on 17 May 1943 and stayed there until August 1943. On their arrival, they found two bamboo huts without roofs, each of which was about 100 yards long. In the two huts, 2,000 men were to be accommodated altogether.⁶⁶⁹ Rickwood testified that immediately after his arrival, the railway construction work was cancelled for five or six days because of the cholera outbreak. During the respite, the POWs built latrines and dug drains for their camp with tools provided by the Japanese.⁶⁷⁰

Despite the cancellation of the railway work, Aspinall states that at Lower Sonkrai, the men immediately began to work on roads and tracks to allow vehicles to go to the upper area with supplies. It took them about five or six weeks to complete the six-mile road for vehicles to go through.⁶⁷¹ Indeed, this road became a vital lifeline afterwards.

On 19 May 1943, cholera spread in Lower Sonkrai, and within a week, 170 men were contracted. The Japanese sent the anti-cholera serum to them. At first, the serum was only enough for fifty men, but later on, they sent sufficient serum for everyone. The POW medical officers set up patients' tents and isolated them. The place later became Cholera Hill. Rickwood testified that Cholera Hill's conditions were appalling as it was full of mud, in which the men were lying. 70

⁶⁶⁷ Aspinall, p.193.

⁶⁶⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.395.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.396-7.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.397-8.

⁶⁷¹ Aspinall, p.194.

men died from the disease in the first week of the epidemic.⁶⁷² Aspinall took a photo of Cholera Hill displayed in his memoirs.⁶⁷³ Probably, it is the only photo taken of Cholera Hill, showing two tents erected over a split bamboo floor as a cholera hospital. Also, Aspinall recollects that one of their cooks got cholera.⁶⁷⁴ The recollection indicates that the infection risk rose to a serious level.

Besides, other diseases such as dysentery, beriberi, and malaria were becoming prevalent among the F Force men. Rickwood testified that at the worst time, seventy-five per cent of them was in the camp hospital.⁶⁷⁵

Sonkrai No.2 Camp

Presumably, the Sonkrai No.2 Camp, the main camp for the British of F Force, was the worst camp that the POWs ever encountered. The Dillon report states that in May 1943, the camp's strength was over 1,600, but when returning to Singapore in December, 1,200 were dead and 200 in hospital.⁶⁷⁶

Colonel Hingston was the POWs' commanding officer of the camp, where Ullmann saw eight large attap huts, six of which were used by the POWs and the rest were shared with Burmese labourers, and the cookhouse was on the river bank.⁶⁷⁷

Bradley, who ended the march at this camp, describes the camp on his arrival as a sea of mud at the height of the monsoon.⁶⁷⁸ Furthermore, Bradley states that:

The latrine pits were overflowing, because of the constant use and the now almost permanent rains, and the approach to them from the huts was fouled by men whose dysentery was so intense that they just could not reach the latrines in time.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷² TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.398.

⁶⁷³ Aspinall, p.207

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p.205.

⁶⁷⁵ Rickwood's testimony, p.400.

⁶⁷⁶ Dillon report, p.4.

⁶⁷⁷ Stewart, p.92.

⁶⁷⁸ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.51.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., p.52.

Atcherley, who also ended the march at this camp, states that Asian labourers had been working, and many of them died of cholera before the F Force men arrived at the camp. Their decomposed corpses remained in one corner of the camp area, and the men had to clear up and burn them.⁶⁸⁰

According to Ullmann, at Sonkrai No.2, cholera broke out two days after the first party reached the camp, and dozens of men were instantly infected. At first, they were isolated in a specific part of the camp. However, the following night, the Japanese ordered the POWs to immediately remove them to a place half a mile away from the camp amid a storm. The next morning, it was found that the site was a cremation area for dead labourers. The remains were strewn about, rotten in the mud, covered with flies.⁶⁸¹ The POWs regarded the isolation order as a 'deliberate killing of the cholera patients by denying them shelter' to save the working Force.⁶⁸²

Laird recollects that the first task for the F Force men at the camp was to make the impassable track passable for vehicles, without which no supplies would come until the railway went through.⁶⁸³ Nevertheless, the supplies by vehicle were still insufficient. Laird explains that supplies dwindled to a trickle by the time they arrived at Sonkrai No.2, almost the top on the line.⁶⁸⁴

When Ullmann arrived at this camp, the construction work to build the embankment and the bridge had already been suspended because of the workforce shortage. Only 300 men out of 1,600 were fit to work. Nevertheless, Ullmann also states that the POWs had to work for keeping the road open for supplies to come.⁶⁸⁵ Laird recollects that two weeks after their arrival, only 75 men out of 1,600 were fit to work, and 85 dead from cholera at that point.⁶⁸⁶

At Sonkrai No.2, the notorious Japanese engineer officer, Lieutenant Abe, was

⁶⁸⁰ Atcherley, Location No.197.

⁶⁸¹ Stewart, p.93.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Laird, pp.98-9.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., p.99.

⁶⁸⁵ Stewart, p.94.

⁶⁸⁶ Laird, p.99.

directing the railway construction. The post-war episode of Abe and Bradley was mentioned in a previous chapter. Bradley states in his memoirs that “the Engineer Officer, Lt. Abe, was conspicuous at all times in failing to stop brutal treatment by his men, even in his presence.”⁶⁸⁷ Ullmann describes the relationship between Abe and the senior British officers as follows:

Relations with him had been tolerably good at the beginning when Lieutenant Colonels Pope and Ferguson had been in charge. They deteriorated after both officers fell ill, and been replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Hingston.⁶⁸⁸

Notably, Ullmann observed that Abe disliked Hingston, who was much tougher than his predecessors.⁶⁸⁹ Laird recalls Abe’s character as follows:

Abe was a real bad one – not just the usual Bushido attitude, but really vicious as well. Fortunately, Cyril Wild, an outstanding Japanese interpreter, was at Songkrai and quickly took the measure of Lieut. Abe who was tracked down after the War and executed for War Crimes – well deserved. In general, I did not feel vicious about the Nips, but I certainly did about this one.⁶⁹⁰

Laird’s statement needs a correction: Abe was sentenced to death in the war crimes trial of Banno and six others, but the sentence was commuted to 15 years imprisonment.⁶⁹¹ Laird put an addendum to his memoirs in 1995 and revised his remarks about Abe, who had met with Bradley and apologised for his war guilt fifty years after the war.⁶⁹²

According to Ullmann, in this camp, a Japanese sergeant in charge of Korean guards was on the POWs' side whenever he could, although he was powerless in

⁶⁸⁷ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.55.

⁶⁸⁸ Stewart, p.94.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Laird, p.91.

⁶⁹¹ See TNA PRO WO235/1034. Davies’ report, p.354.

⁶⁹² Laird, p.90.

front of the engineers.⁶⁹³ Notably, F Force was under the direct command of the 5th Railway Regiment, and thus the Japanese camp staff could not work against the engineers. Therefore, in the trial, Banno testified that:

There are persons among the accused whose stand-point is exactly opposite from my stand-point, as he being the one who actually had the direction over the POW.⁶⁹⁴

Upper Sonkrai

The Australians' Upper Sonkrai Camp was also known as the Sonkrai No.3 Camp. Fukuda, having moved from Lower Sonkrai with the POWs, was in charge of this camp. Rickwood's group left Lower Sonkrai for Upper Sonkrai on 1 August 1943. The party marched for the 10km distance, carrying their sick comrades. Although the Japanese gave them plenty of halts on the way to the new camp, a POW died just after the arrival.⁶⁹⁵ Rickwood stayed at Upper Sonkrai until early in November 1943. At first, there were 1,400 men in the camp, 600 of whom died by November.⁶⁹⁶ Notably, Rickwood testified that no more than forty men died of cholera in the camp and that significant causes of death were dysentery and malnutrition as well as beriberi, tropical ulcer and cerebral malaria.⁶⁹⁷ Quinine was the only medicine that the Japanese could supply sufficiently.⁶⁹⁸ The medical treatments that the Japanese provided the F Force men with will be delineated in detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the forced march that F Force was made to carry out and described the Force's predicament. The chapter aimed to show various F Force's

⁶⁹³ Stewart, p.94.

⁶⁹⁴ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.518.

⁶⁹⁵ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p.403.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p.405.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p.406.

episodes not included in the reports compiled by its officers. Although Wild's report vehemently blamed the Japanese for F Force's plight, there are other aspects regarding the march. Even the Japanese were not monolithic. Thus, memoirs of those who actually marched are necessary sources to verify the official account. Various factors taken into account, the Prosecution's accusation against the Japanese seems to be simplified, based on animosity.

In fact, enmity against the Japanese was necessary for the F Force POWs to sustain their spirits and physical conditions under extreme circumstances. In short, the animus against the captor was the key to survival. Wood-Higgs, an F Force member, states in his memoirs that:

It is difficult to convey the utter despair and despondency which pervaded our spirits on this inhuman march. Only our hatred of our captors, our fatalistic acceptance of every hardship saved us from just giving up physically and mentally.⁶⁹⁹

Accordingly, former F Force members vociferously accused the Japanese of being inhumane, and their voices became influential in the media. The media coverage of the Bradley-Abe meeting after 50 years indicates F Force's influence. Consequently, F Force's image tends to represent the plight of all the POWs on the railway, including other Forces.

Especially, Wild played a significant role in giving F Force special status through his activities in the war crimes investigations and trials after the war. After Wild's death, Bradley succeeded Wild's role and consolidated the POWs' public image on the railway by publishing his memoirs and Wild's biography. The mass media supported Bradley's efforts and finally succeeded in taking footage of Abe apologising with tears to Bradley. Thus, the 'F Force' factor was proved to be effective in building the POW's narrative on the railway.

However, there are views other than the mainstream perspective built by Wild and Bradley. For instance, as an NCO interpreter, Ullmann provided a vivid and

⁶⁹⁹ Stanley Wood-Higgs, *Bamboo and Barbed Wire* (Bournemouth: Roman Press, 1988). p.59.

clinical observation of F Force officers and men as well as criticism of the Japanese. Given these frank views, Wild's authoritative account leaves much to be desired. Thus, the predominant narrative should be examined from a broad set of perspectives. The following two chapters will further examine how deeply the 'F Force factor' and Wild's involvement affected the railway's narrative. The next chapter will deal with what happened in the F Force camps after the march.

Chapter 6: F Force and Medical Treatment

Introduction

In mid-May 1943, cholera broke out at Lower Nieke, F Force's first camp. By the end of the month, the disease became rampant in F Force's main camps. Regarding the cholera epidemic, the prosecutor contended in the trial of Banno and six others that "This was directly attributable to the criminal negligence of the Japanese."⁷⁰⁰ Since the Prosecution's opening address was a complete duplicate of Wild's report, the words were uttered by the officer POW who had witnessed F Force's plight. Also, Wild testified in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal in September 1946. Since then, the 'criminal negligence of the Japanese' has been a commonly accepted explanation for F Forces' tragedy. For instance, Gill quotes Wild's phrase in his doctoral thesis 'Coping With Crisis'.⁷⁰¹

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Wild's account represents officers' view, which often omits those of other ranks or their captors. Thus, this chapter will examine the POW authorities' official account of F Force by comparing officers' reports with other sources. The other ranks' memoirs, diaries and testimonies will reveal that F Force was never monolithic. For instance, Wood-Higgs, a medical NCO of F Force from the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), criticises the officers in his memoirs as follows:

The Officers as usual commandeered the hospital and all the stores. I am to endeavour to combat them. [...] These Officers, mostly of junior rank would, in camp, with no duties, literally try to corner all the comforts – the hut with a decent roof; medical supplies and so on. They behaved in this way off and on during the whole of captivity and most officers were heartily detested by their own troops. The more senior an Officer was, the more likely that he was fair and above board. [...] Let me make it clear at once, that this did not apply to Officers of the R.A.M.C.. They are in any case, all or almost all, doctors in

⁷⁰⁰ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.384.

⁷⁰¹ Gill, 'Coping With Crisis', p.104.

civilian life; [...] ⁷⁰²

Such attitudes of officers were never mentioned in the official reports compiled by the officers. Notably, the medical NCO points out the division between the combatant officers and the medical officers. Hearder's research on Australian medical officers' role in captivity confirms this point. Although not focusing on F Force, in particular, Hearder's doctoral thesis 'Careers in Captivity' reveals the fundamental difference between medical officers and combatant officers in their captivity during WWII. It is reasonable that the doctors' high-standard morality to save lives is fundamentally different from combatant officers' duty and morale to defeat the enemy and save the country.

Basically, the Australian medical officers' perspective influenced Hearder, who argues that the medical officers "suffered a great deal of frustration and disillusionment in the face of cruel captors who placed no value on POWs' lives."⁷⁰³ The sensational phrase 'cruel captors who placed no value on POWs' lives' sounds similar to Wild's phrase 'criminal negligence'. Nevertheless, these phrases are a little too vague to clarify what the Japanese did or did not.

Thus, this chapter will examine whether the Japanese neglected their duties and placed no value on POWs' lives in F Force's extreme circumstance. For the examination of Wild's and other officers' reports, Captain Susumu Tanio's testimony will be a useful source as he was the Japanese chief medical officer of F Force and thus a co-accused in the trial of Banno and six others. Tanio's testimony, as well as Banno's, will explain what the Japanese were thinking in the face of F Force's crisis.

This chapter will delineate what happened in F Force's camps and the Tambaya Hospital Camp in Burma to achieve the objective. Since 3,000 out of 7,000 F Force POWs lost their lives, medical treatment was necessarily a critical issue of F Force. What caused so many casualties will be ascertained by comparing the POW medical officers' view with the Japanese medical officer's. Through the examination, it will be revealed why Wild's perspective became 'authoritative',

⁷⁰² Wood-Higgs, p.61.

⁷⁰³ Hearder, p.21.

although he was neither a commanding officer nor a medical officer.

A Japanese report

Cholera, dysentery, beriberi, malaria, and tropical ulcers were the major threats to F Force men's lives. In particular, cholera is thought to be one of the primary cause of F Force's high mortality. Nevertheless, in the trial, the prosecutor argued that although cholera killed some 750 Force men, the most deadly disease was dysentery, aggravated by malnutrition, further worsened by malaria or beriberi or both.⁷⁰⁴ F Force with 7,000 strength left Singapore in mid-April 1943, but only 700 men were out at work by 20 June: the rest of the Force was lying in make-shift hospitals in the camps.⁷⁰⁵ Then, 1,800 men died by the end of July.⁷⁰⁶

An F Force company's record, kept by the Japanese staff attached to it, describes how serious the situation was from their arrival at Nieke in mid-May until the end of July. The Japanese record states that the company arrived in the Nieke area in mid-May after the night-time march from Ban Pong, proceeding 22 km a night: it repeated the move eighteen times to reach the destination. As huts in camps were without roofs despite the rain, the POWs had to use their tents. The Japanese record continues that on 16 May, cholera broke out in an adjoining hut of labourers, killing six labourers in three days. The POWs' health conditions on their arrival at this camp were as follows: 65% fit or semi-fit; 15% lightly sick; 20% heavily sick; the company's 80% were suffering from dysentery. Notably, their food ration was only a cup of rice and onion soup.⁷⁰⁷

On 25 May 1943, the company's first cholera case was found: two died, one was in a critical condition, and the work was suspended. Only a bag of rice was delivered to the company. Most POWs were in a condition of diarrhoea.⁷⁰⁸ At the end of May, the POWs were vaccinated and also inoculated against cholera for the second time. The Japanese report states that the POWs legs became very thin, and

⁷⁰⁴ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.387.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.,p.388.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Hiroike, p.328.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p.329.

quinine's continuous use began to cause a side effect on POWs' bodies, such as convulsions and hearing difficulty. On 4 June, the work resumed, but the participation rate was 35%. The POWs' food was still limited to twice a day. Inevitably, the POWs' conversations were always about the food. From 6 June, proper white rice ration was issued three times a day. On 11 June, the sick were now 47%.⁷⁰⁹ On 13 June 1943, the ration of rice began to decrease again. On 14 June, the POWs ate rice porridge and soup as breakfast, rice porridge and half a cup of coffee as lunch, and rice porridge as supper. The water level of the river was gradually rising. The mud on the road was as deep as their knees, and its colour was as black as ink.⁷¹⁰

From 17 to 24 June, the company moved to another camp. As of 24 June, almost all men were suffering from sickness; 39% were severe, and 61% light. The POWs worked through the night. One-fourth of them did not have shoes. Those who had shoes had cut them to prevent a tropical ulcer. Only the sick and the older put on hats. At the end of June, rice arrived, and thus the food ration could meet the ration scale. The POWs looked satisfied, but side dishes were still in short supply. They had rice and coffee with a spoonful of sugar. On 12 July, food for side dishes arrived, and dried fish and vegetables were supplied. However, the meals were twice a day. Now the work participation rate was 14%, and the present members decreased to 580 in number. The POWs were inoculated against cholera again.⁷¹¹ On 20 July, the lower ground was flooded by the rain. Only 60 out of 580 members could go to work, and the POWs became terribly thin. As of the end of July, the death toll reached fifty.⁷¹²

Above is the Japanese record of an F Force company, not the whole Force. The other groups' health conditions can be seen from ex-POWs' memoirs, reports and testimonies. In particular, the diary written by Wood-Higgs, a medical NCO, is valuable.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pp.329-330.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., pp.333-334.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., pp.334-335.

⁷¹² Ibid., pp.337-338

Cholera crisis

Banno, the Japanese F Force commander, testified that he arrived at Lower Nieke on 11 May 1943 and saw the first cholera patient on 15 May.⁷¹³ This is the beginning of the cholera crisis. Wood-Higgs' diary states that his party reached Lower Nieke on 18 May: rations were good but scanty, and two men died of cholera on the same day.⁷¹⁴ Banno testified that because of the cholera outbreak, he ordered the Force to evacuate the camp and move to Lower Sonkrai.⁷¹⁵ Wood-Higgs' diary says that on 19 May, the parties of Trains 7, 8, and 9 left the camp for the next camp, Nieke Proper. However, Wood-Higgs remained there to look after the hospital stores. On the day, another POW died of cholera, and the bodies were burned.⁷¹⁶ Cholera spread along the river from villagers to labourers and POWs and now from camp to camp.

Nieke Proper was the F Force's main camp, where Banno and Harris set their headquarters. The headquarters' camp had relatively a small number of POWs – 600 British and Australians, and thus the number of cholera patients was relatively small.

Lower Sonkrai was the Australians' main camp, where 2,000 men were to be accommodated, became well-known for the Cholera Hill, the isolation area for the disease. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the first party arrived at the camp on 17 May, and immediately after the arrival, the construction work was cancelled for five or six days due to the cholera outbreak.⁷¹⁷ On 19 May, cholera became rampant in the camp: 170 men contracted, and 70 men died in the first week of the epidemic.⁷¹⁸ In the trial, the prosecutor contended that Banno's decision to evacuate Lower Nieke to Lower Sonkrai spread cholera to other camps. However, the diary and the testimony indicate that the cholera outbreak had already begun in other camps when the evacuation was decided.

⁷¹³ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.485.

⁷¹⁴ Wood-Higgs, p.60.

⁷¹⁵ Banno's testimony, p.485.

⁷¹⁶ Wood-Higgs, p.61.

⁷¹⁷ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, pp.396-8.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., p.398.

Sonkrai No.2, the main camp for the British, was the worst-hit camp along the railway. In May, 1,600 British POWs, commanded by Lt. Colonel Hingston, marched into the camp, and 1,200 were dead when they returned to Singapore in December 1943.⁷¹⁹ In the first two months, cholera was the leading cause of deaths in the camp, killing more than 200 men. According to Ullmann, cholera broke out two days after the first party entered the camp, and dozens of men were instantly infected. Ullmann points out that the first victims were the Manchester Regiment's men, who had received only half of their prophylactic injections in Singapore.⁷²⁰ The inoculation will be discussed later in this chapter.

Laird states in his memoirs that the men brought cholera with them, having picked it up in the transit camps during the march and that their weakened state at the end of the march made them vulnerable to cholera and other diseases. Thus, two weeks after arriving at Sonkrai No.2, 85 men were already dead from cholera alone, and only 75 out of 1,600 F Force men were classed as fit to work.⁷²¹

Bradley, who was in the same camp, states that:

After the outbreak of cholera early in May, a Japanese medical party eventually arrived and 'glass rodged' us, to take a smear for analysis. This glass rodding was a somewhat crude method of finding out if any of us were cholera carriers.⁷²²

The pathogen analysis found that Bradley was a cholera carrier. Bradley recollects that he had most of the cholera symptoms but did not die in twenty-four hours and thus survived.⁷²³

Laird describes the Japanese attitude as 'extremely nervous of cholera.'⁷²⁴ Thus, Bradley and other cholera patients were ordered to immediately leave their

⁷¹⁹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Prosecution's opening address, p.388.

⁷²⁰ Stewart, pp.95-6.

⁷²¹ Laird, p.99.

⁷²² Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.56.

⁷²³ Ibid., p.57.

⁷²⁴ Laird, p.92.

huts and enter the isolation ward five or six hundred yards away on the opposite side of the railway track. Bradley recalls that:

The senior officers appealed that at least the sick and dying should be left where they were until the following morning, but this was refused. All fit men turned out to help to carry and pitch some tents, brought up by the IJA medical party.⁷²⁵

Bradley criticises their captors' attitude by quoting Captain P.U. Coates' words from his diary *Up Country with 'F' Force*: "This move was altogether the most inhuman thing I have ever witnessed."⁷²⁶ The cholera isolation ward was run by Lieutenant Turner, a medical officer of the Malayan Medical Service, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) and some orderlies. Medicines for cholera treatment were almost non-existence. At any rate, those who were hospitalised as cholera patients were too late to be treated. Surprisingly, Turner was once infected with cholera but treated himself along with other patients and survived.⁷²⁷

This is how cholera hit F Force in May 1943, but it is not the end of cholera epidemic in the F Force camps.

Second crisis

Wood-Higgs' diary dated 12 August 1943 states that the conditions in Sonkrai No.2 were terrible: they had ten deaths a day, and the stink of ulcers was overpowering in the camp, adding that cholera broke out again at Nieke.⁷²⁸ This was the second outbreak of cholera. Thus, the diary dated 15 August reads that the POWs in Sonkrai No.2 had another injection for cholera and plague.⁷²⁹ Notably, this time, the threat was not only cholera but other diseases and fatigue.

According to Hiroike, 537 POWs of F Force died in August 1943, which was the

⁷²⁵ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.57.

⁷²⁶ P.U. Coates quoted in Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.57.

⁷²⁷ Laird, p.92.

⁷²⁸ Wood-Higgs, p.77.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

worst month for the Force.⁷³⁰ At this point, as the F Force men's physical strength reached the limit, the Japanese decided to substitute other workforces for the F Force men. Wood-Higgs' diary dated 25 August states that:

The Nips have decided we are no good at building railroads and have imported two thousand Burmese. It is very pleasant to see them working. More people have gone to Burma, but the Nip insists that we are going back to Changi.⁷³¹

'More people have gone to Burma' means that more sick men were transferred to the Tambaya hospital in Burma, where better treatment could be given. Accordingly, the pressure from the railway engineers was reduced considerably. Notably, as of August, the Japanese already decided that F Force should be sent back to Singapore.

Wood-Higgs' diary dated 17 September states that the camp hospital at Sonkrai No.2 was being run smoothly, and there was no more transfer to Tambaya. Moreover, the diary says, the Japanese imported some Dutch POWs of A Force from Burma to complete the railway.⁷³² Thus, in the latter half of September, the hospital conditions of Sonkrai No.2 became stable. Furthermore, on or around 19 September, the railway was supposed to reach the camp from the Burmese side, which would make supplies more stable. Wood-Higgs' diary dated 22 September says that:

Canteen goods are trickling in, and we have been issued with one pair of socks, grey cotton and wool, and one pair of shorts elastic white cotton both of very inferior quality to make up some of our clothing deficiencies. Most of us are literally in rags. The railroad was laid through here three days ago, and trucks with lorries and engines [lorries as engines?] have been through.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ Hiroike, p.338.

⁷³¹ Wood-Higgs, p.87.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Ibid.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the POWs' camp commandant at Sonkrai No.2 was Dillon. Notably, the commandant of the worst-hit camp complied and submitted a report on F Force to the *Kempeitai* on his way back to Singapore and the British military authorities on his return to Singapore in December 1943. Wild stayed in this camp and co-authored the report.

Supplies from Burma

Upper Sonkrai, 10 km up-country from Lower Sonkrai, was the second base camp for the Australians. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rickwood's party moved from Lower Sonkrai to Upper Sonkrai on 1 August. Although 600 out of the 1,400 men were dead in the camp by early in November, no more than forty men died of cholera. The primary causes of death were dysentery and malnutrition, combined with beriberi, tropical ulcer and cerebral malaria. The Japanese could only supply the POWs with plenty of quinine.⁷³⁴

However, Rickwood testified that although food rations were at first unsatisfactory in quality and quantity, the latter improved later on so that the POWs could eat as much rice as they wanted. Also, meat, prawns and beans were supplied, although the meat was still poor in quality and covered with grub.⁷³⁵ The reason for the considerable improvement of food supplies was that Upper Sonkrai was closer to Burma, from which supplies were transported, whereas the supply route in Thailand was often disrupted by monsoon and floods. Rickwood saw six-wheeled lorries going through almost every day at Upper Sonkrai, driven by A Force's Australian POWs.⁷³⁶ The Australians were working on the Burmese side. Rickwood's testimony corresponds to Banno's testimony that camps of Sonkrai No.2, Upper Sonkrai, and Changaraya, the most up-country camp across the Thai-Burma border, had good roads and thus no trouble about food supplies, whereas Lower Sonkrai and Nieke were in a very different situation because of the

⁷³⁴ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, pp.402-6.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p.408.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

communications cut so often.⁷³⁷

There is another correspondence between Rickwood's testimony and Banno's regarding Upper Sonkrai's Japanese commandant, a cadet officer who became a commandant after Fukuda left the camp. Rickwood testified about what the new commandant did for the POWs as follows:

There was a cadet officer who was promoted to a Lieutenant who took his place and he ordered no bashings and condition improved, and he told the Japanese engineers that no men would be sent out to work unless he had the assurance that there would be no bashings, and no men were sent out for one day and on one occasion he refused to send the sick men out to work.⁷³⁸

There is just a little misunderstanding in Rickwood's observation. Fukuda was actually the commandant of Lower Sonkrai, and Banno was in charge of Upper Sonkrai. However, as the Commander of F Force, Banno was mainly stationed at the Headquarters in Nieke and sent to Upper Sonkrai his proxy, the cadet officer. The cadet officer carried out the order issued by Banno, who had prohibited his subordinate officers from making the sick POWs go to work. Banno answered the court's questions as follows:

Q. You were aware that sick POWs were forced to go to work on the railway?

A. No, I did not know about it.

Q. Were you not made aware of this fact by the British Medical Officers in charge?

A. I did hear about it from them, but it was a fact that I did give orders that they should not do such things, and I also investigated with the commandants of the sub-stations, and the report was that such was not the case.⁷³⁹

Tambaya Hospital Camp

⁷³⁷ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.488.

⁷³⁸ Rickwood's testimony, p.412.

⁷³⁹ Banno's testimony, p.519

As mentioned above, F Force's sick men were transferred to the Tambaya Hospital Camp in Burma. Tambaya was at the 50 km point from Thanbyuzayat, the railway's starting point in Burma. Laird recollects that in September or October 1943, the surviving men of F Force were evacuated to the Tambaya Hospital Camp on the Burmese side.⁷⁴⁰ Ullmann describes the evacuation in detail in his memoirs. On an unknown date, F Force men heard the news that the sick who would not recover within two months were to be transferred to a new hospital camp in Burma. At first, the POWs were sceptical if it was a hospital camp indeed. However, a letter from Harris arrived at Sonkrai No.2, outlining the organisation of the hospital camp for 1,200 men: Hutchison was appointed the commanding officer; Major Hunt, the chief medical officer; Ullmann, interpreter.⁷⁴¹ According to Ullmann, in the first week of August 1943, the advance party arrived in Sonkrai No.2 from Nieke without any notice. Then, the new hospital camp staff, including Ullmann, were told to be ready to depart in half an hour. They marched eight kilometres to Changaraya, where they stayed a night and had 'far better' food than at Sonkrai No.2.⁷⁴² The advance party consisted of seventy British and Australian POWs, two-thirds of whom were the medical staff. The party left Changaraya by lorry.⁷⁴³

In his diary dated 25 July 1943, Wood-Higgs mentions a rumour in Sonkrai No.2 about a new hospital in Burma, stating that "There is reason to believe that some patients and staff will be shortly moved to Burma to a new 'convalescent depot'." ⁷⁴⁴ Moreover, Wood-Higgs's diary states that on an unknown date between 26 July and 1 August, a small group including Major Philips and Fred Steward left Sonkrai No.2 for Burma to establish a 'convalescent depot'.⁷⁴⁵ As his diary corresponds to Ullmann's memoirs, the convalescent depot was presumably the Tambaya Hospital.

⁷⁴⁰ Laird, p.97.

⁷⁴¹ Stewart, p.114.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., pp.114-5.

⁷⁴⁴ Wood-Higgs, p.76.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., p.76-7.

Ullmann recalls that “The Three Pagodas Pass was the watershed.”⁷⁴⁶ The conditions on the Burmese side was much better than those on the Thai side. Ullmann observed that the Australian and Dutch POWs on the Burmese side were not so thin or had no empty eyes; in other words, they were fit.⁷⁴⁷ Here, the lorries given to the 5th Railway Regiment in Burma were useful to transport the supplies. The POWs probably did not know that when the railway construction started in June 1942, most lorries of the Railway Corps were given to the 5th Railway Regiment because the 9th Railway Regiment could use the river transport in Thailand.⁷⁴⁸

Thus, the two Railway Regiments adopted different approaches in the railway construction according to their different situations and circumstances. The 9th Railway Regiment in Thailand covered twice as long as the 5th Railway Regiment and divided their railway section into four; 1) Non-Pladuk – Kanchanaburi, 2) Kanchanaburi – Wanyai, 3) Wanyai – Kinsaiyok – Pran Kassi, 4) Pran Kassi – Konkoita. The railhead points were the construction bases, where materials and food were forwarded and gathered by boat. On the other hand, the 5th Railway Regiment, which started the construction from Thanbyuzayat, Burma, did not have a river to use parallel to the line and thus needed to build a road along the line. Therefore, the 5th Railway Regiment continued to extend the rail from its railhead at Thanbyuzayat until it was connected at Konkoita to the other rail from Thailand on 17 October 1943.⁷⁴⁹

By 21 September 1943, the railway from Non-Pladuk, Thailand, under the 9th Railway Regiment, came to Tamaran Pat (244 km point). In the same month, the railway from Burma under the 5th Railway Regiment reached Nieke. Notably, Upper Sonkrai was connected with Thanbyuzayat on the railway in August 1943.⁷⁵⁰ The connection made it possible to evacuate F Force patients to the Tambaya Hospital Camp in August 1943.

⁷⁴⁶ Stewart, p.119.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., p.119.

⁷⁴⁸ Hiroike, p.114.

⁷⁴⁹ Hiroike, pp.359-362.

⁷⁵⁰ Hiroike, p.362.

Ullmann describes his first sight of the Tambaya camp in his memoirs as follows:

The camp straddled the railway line, nine dilapidated huts on the east side, three on the west. Before the war, these huts had been part of a British coolie camp, and recently they had been occupied by the prisoners of A Force. Gangs of Burmese were at work, thatching and rebuilding walls.⁷⁵¹

According to Ullmann, a week after their arrival at Tambaya, several trainloads of ration supplies came, including vegetables: the quantity of which was enough for 1,300 men, and their food instantly improved. Nevertheless, Ullmann blames the Japanese for still holding back and letting the vegetables rot for their sheer malice.⁷⁵² It is unknown why the Japanese did such a thing. It is still possible that Ullmann might have seen the Japanese holding back rotten vegetables as fresh vegetables would become rotten easily there.

According to Ullmann, despite clashing several times with Commandant Saito, Hunt, the POWs' senior medical officer, was the 'The man primarily responsible for bringing energy and confidence to the Tambaya camp'.⁷⁵³ The hospital was run in line with a new policy: a combatant POW officer, not a medical officer, was in charge of each hut. The reason for the new policy will be explained later in this chapter. Besides, this hospital camp made tremendous efforts to keep everyone clean and immediately organised teams for sanitation, wood-collecting and cremation, to which fit and semi-fit men were assigned.⁷⁵⁴ Atcherley was one of the F Force survivors transferred to Tambaya from Sonkrai No.2.

These episodes of F Force men and IJA servicemen do not seem to be applicable to the existing image based on what Wild calls the 'criminal negligence' of the Japanese.

⁷⁵¹ Stewart, p.121-2.

⁷⁵² Ibid., p.122.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., pp.123-4.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 123

Inoculation

Notably, the Japanese medical unit inoculated the F Force POWs against cholera and other diseases. However, neither Gill nor Hearder mentioned the fact in their theses. Accordingly, little is known to the public regarding their inoculations. F Force men had their first inoculations against cholera and plague in Singapore before departing to Thailand. Wood-Higgs' diary states that on 14 April, he had the first injection for plague, and on 19 April, two more inoculations against cholera and plague.⁷⁵⁵ Atcherley also recollects that he had the inoculations in Singapore. Even in Thailand, F Force POWs were inoculated against cholera. Wood-Higgs' diary states that his party was inoculated at Konkoita: on 15 May, his party arrived at Konkoita, and on the evening of 16 May, they were made to move two hundred yards down the road because the Japanese evacuated the camp, where seven locals died of cholera within twenty-four hours; then, the F Force men had cholera inoculations.⁷⁵⁶ Also, the Japanese report on an F Force company states that late in May, the POWs were inoculated against cholera for the second time.⁷⁵⁷ Again the company had cholera inoculations on 12 July.⁷⁵⁸

Here, questions arise as to why 750 POWs of F Force died of cholera and why the second cholera outbreak occurred in July and August, despite these inoculations. Thus, in the trial, the prosecutor questioned Tanio, the Japanese chief medical officer of F Force, about the inoculations' efficacy. Tanio answered the questions with his medical expertise and knowledge of what was happening inside the Japanese organisation.

Tanio arrived in Ban Pong on 5 June.⁷⁵⁹ While in Singapore, Tanio received a telegram from Thailand that cholera had broken out in the F Force camps. Before leaving for Thailand, Tanio heard that Captain Suzuki, the senior medical officer at Changi, had given the inoculation materials to the POW medical officers and that the POWs had already been inoculated against cholera before their

⁷⁵⁵ Wood-Higgs, p.52.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p.60.

⁷⁵⁷ Hiroike., pp.329-330

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., pp.334-335.

⁷⁵⁹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio's testimony, p.529.

departure.⁷⁶⁰ Tanio was supposed to receive all the medical supplies in Thailand and thus did not bring any cholera vaccine with him.

At Kanchanaburi, Tanio received some materials for cholera inoculations.⁷⁶¹ The Railway Corps' Medical Department told Tanio that all the POWs who passed Kanchanaburi had been inoculated against cholera, and thus it was unnecessary to bring the materials with him. On his arrival at Nieke, Tanio confirmed that all the F Force men had been inoculated. However, cholera was still rampant there. Thus, the medical materials he brought with him were useful.⁷⁶²

In the Trial, Tanio testified that the IJA made it rule to give an inoculation every three months when an epidemic occurred.⁷⁶³ In other words, the inoculations' efficacy would expire in three months. As the F Force POWs received the inoculations at Kanchanaburi between late April and early May, the next injection should be done between late July and early August. In fact, on 14 July, the POWs requested Tanio for an additional cholera vaccine. Thus, Tanio provided the vaccine by the end of July or at least the earliest time in August.

The prosecutor questioned Tanio whether it was too late to save a great many lives. Tanio answered that it was not too late since all the POWs were also inoculated right after they arrived at Nieke and that the inoculation's efficacy would last until the end of August.⁷⁶⁴ The inoculation at Nieke corresponds to the POWs' memoirs and the Japanese report.

Next, the prosecutor questioned whether the POWs' resistance against cholera deteriorated due to their weakened physical conditions. Tanio answered that there was no difference in the inoculations' efficacy between the healthy and the debilitated in preventing the disease by inoculation. Then, the prosecutor asked how Tanio would account for the second outbreak after the inoculations. Tanio answered from a medical viewpoint that the vaccine could not ensure full

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., p.535.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

⁷⁶² Ibid., p.536.

⁷⁶³ Ibid., p.535.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., p.537.

immunisation.⁷⁶⁵ This is a blind spot in the mind of non-medical professionals who would expect complete prevention by the inoculation. Besides, Tanio pointed out some facts as causes of the second outbreak in July and August: some POWs continued to drink unboiled water while at work; many POWs kept their mud-covered boots on the floor in their huts to prevent them from being stolen by their comrades.⁷⁶⁶

Report 'History of "F" Force'

Tanio's testimony presented some important facts omitted in Wild's account that regarded F Force's cholera epidemic due to the 'criminal negligence' of the Japanese. Thus, this section will look at other sources in detail. The prosecutor submitted to the court a report entitled 'History of "F" Force' as their primary evidence. The report consists of two parts: Part I – 'History of "F" Force' by Lt. Colonel Harris, RA; and Part II – 'Medical Report on F Force' by Lt. Colonel Huston, RAMC.⁷⁶⁷ Thus, F Force's Commander and Senior Medical Officer respectively compiled and submitted their reports to the British military authorities: Harris provided his account from a general perspective, and Huston from a medical viewpoint. Each has several appendices – reports made by other officers and doctors. In this paper, the former is called the Harris report, and the latter the Huston report.

According to the Harris report, when the IJA ordered F Force to move to Thailand by 13 trains in April 1943, the Force HQ with all heavy baggage and medical stores was to move in the first train. However, it was changed at the last minute, and the HQ and medical stores departed in Train 7. Consequently, the first six trains were for the Australians, the last six for the British, and the HQ in the middle. The Harris report states this alteration as 'a most unfortunate change which had far-reaching consequences'⁷⁶⁸, asserting that if the medical stores and other essential gear had arrived at Ban Pong on the first train, they would have

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., p.538.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., p.536.

⁷⁶⁷ TNA PRO WO208/3258, 'History of F Force'.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 'History of F Force by Lt. Col. Harris' (Harris report), para.11.

been moved forward before the men's arrival and the rainy season making the roads impassable. Moreover, the report states that the Australians could not have their second injections against cholera before their departure as the alteration advanced their departure by two days.⁷⁶⁹ However, the departure alteration cannot be seen in the POWs memoirs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Atcherley, a British officer, states that he left Singapore on 21 April, three days after the first party. Also, Ullmann, a British NCO, left Singapore three or four days after the first party. The cause of this discrepancy and the reason for the alteration are unknown.

Huston's medical report states that:

Vaccination against Smallpox, inoculation against Dysentery, Plague, Cholera and Enteric were given in 2 doses at weekly intervals under Area management. In some cases, these were not completed owing to alterations in the train programme.⁷⁷⁰

Thus, it seems to be true that the train alterations prevented some POWs from having the second dose. Nevertheless, the alterations' impact on the inoculation is unknown as the Japanese inoculated them in Thailand. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, trains and lorries were not available for F Force to transport their men and baggage from Ban Pong, which was why the medical stores and heavy baggage were left behind. Thus, even if the medical stores had arrived on the first train, the result would have been the same without proper transport means.

Besides, there is a discrepancy between the Harris report and the Huston report. The former states that some British contingents had no inoculation against cholera at all in Singapore due to the short issue of the anti-cholera vaccine.⁷⁷¹ However, the latter does not mention such a thing. The alleged failure of the cholera inoculation cannot be confirmed as it is unknown what was going on inside

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., Huston report, p.1

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., Harris report, para.12.

the Force. However, judging from the Harris report stating that “All ranks were glass-rodged by the IJA and instructions were issued for re-vaccination and inoculation against typhoid, plague, dysentery and cholera”⁷⁷², it seems that the Japanese left the inoculation in the hands of the POW medical officers. Thus, it is highly likely that the Japanese did not have a good grasp of the situation inside the Force. Indeed, Tanio testified that Suzuki had given the inoculation material to the POW medical officers and that he did not know that some POWs had missed the second injection.⁷⁷³

Mortality Comparison

As the Harris report argues that some Australians missed the second cholera dose before their departure, the cholera mortality of the Australians should be higher than that of the British. Otherwise, the accusation would become pointless. Thus, this section will compare the cholera mortality between the British and the Australians.

The Huston report indicates that 637 F Force POWs died of cholera in total: 444 were British; 193 Australians.⁷⁷⁴ Monthly cholera deaths are as follows:

May – 158
Jun. – 359
Jul. – 50
Aug. – 60
Sep. – 10
Afterwards – None

The numbers of cholera deaths in each camp are as follows:

Nieke & Lower Nieke: 24
Lower Sonkrai: 103

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio’s testimony, p.535.

⁷⁷⁴ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Huston report, Appendix “A”.

Sonkrai No.2: 232
Upper Sonkrai: 59
Changaraya: 160
Konkoita; Timonta; Takanun: 56
Others: 3

The Harris report states that, at the end of June 1943, the death toll in Lower Nieke was only 34 (2 officers and 32 men); 19 died of cholera. The report praised the POW medical staff for the achievement “through unceasing effort on the part of the mixed British and Australian hospital staff and of Capt. A. Barber, RAMC, on whom the bulk of the work fell.”⁷⁷⁵ At Lower Nieke and Nieke Proper, under the direct control of the Force HQ, the situation was always in hand, and thus only 26 died of cholera out of the total strength of 1,300 there.⁷⁷⁶

Lower Sonkrai was the main camp for 1,800 Australians, and the Harris report states that the Australians succeeded in exterminating cholera there: only 110 died of the disease, that is, 6% of the strength. The report praises their tremendous and supremely credible effort, especially on the part of Major Bruce Hunt, AAMC.⁷⁷⁷ Rickwood, a quartermaster of AIF, testified that “cholera was not the bad disease there, there were round about 100 [deaths] at Lower Songkrai.”⁷⁷⁸

Upper Sonkrai was also the Australian camp, where 400 POWs were stationed, and, as the report states, “the AIF similarly stamped out the disease reasonably quickly.”⁷⁷⁹ As Huston’s report shows, the number of cholera deaths in Upper Sonkrai was 59, that is, 15% of the strength.

On the other hand, in the British camps Sonkrai No.2 and Changaraya, where 1,600 and 700 POWs were stationed, the numbers of cholera deaths were 227 (14%) and 159 (23%), respectively. Notably, the British cholera mortality at Sonkrai No.2 (14%) was twice as high as that of the Australians at Lower Sonkrai

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., Harris report, para.44.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid. para.46.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood's testimony, p. 418.

⁷⁷⁹ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Harris report, para.46.

(6%). Furthermore, the British cholera mortality at Changaraya (23%) was higher than that of the Australians at Upper Sonkrai (15%) by 8 points, despite the similar camp conditions. The Harris report attributed the British higher cholera mortality to their physical state and camp conditions.⁷⁸⁰

Importantly, the Huston report points out seven factors for ‘a much heavier preponderance of cases and deaths among British Troops than among Australian’ as follows:⁷⁸¹

- (1) The Australians were a fitter body of men when leaving Singapore.
- (2) The Australians were left intact in main units (26th, 29th, and 30th Bns.). However, the British were composed of scattered tiny units.
- (3) Many British and Volunteers were on Asiatic service for years without a break since before the war.
- (4) Conditions at Changaraya were deplorable as accommodation, medical supplies and the Japanese administration were worse than anywhere of F Force camps.
- (5) The Australians were better at adapting themselves to strange conditions whereas the British were not good at fending for themselves under these primitive and stark realities after generations of living in towns.
- (6) The Australians, in general, were more healthy and hygiene minded, apparently having been taught the rules of hygiene as one of the most important essentials in soldier training.
- (7) The Australian parties made considerable progress on the march before the monsoon struck.

The Harris report also mentions five factors for the British higher mortality not only from cholera but by all causes: in F Force, the Australian mortality was 28%, whereas the British 61%. The five factors are as follows:⁷⁸²

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., Huston report, p.14.

⁷⁸² Ibid., Harris report, para.101.

- (1) The Australians were all members of one volunteer force. The British were a heterogeneous collection of men of all races and units.
- (2) The average physical standard of the Australian force was incomparably higher than that of the British, a mixed force of regular soldiers, territorials, militiamen, conscripts and local volunteers.
- (3) Many of the Australians were used to looking after themselves under conditions in the jungle or the bush.
- (4) The Australians were fortunate in completing their march and occupying their camps before the monsoon broke.
- (5) At the main Australian camp, a Japanese officer of the POW Camp Administration was stationed. However, at the main British camps there were no Japanese officers; therefore the Japanese Engineers could do as they pleased.

Ironically, while stating in the beginning that ‘a most unfortunate change’ of the train deprived the Australians of the second cholera dose by advancing their departure by two days, the Harris report states at the end that the Australians were fortunate in completing their march before the rainy season began. The higher cholera mortality of the British indicates that the train alterations had little impact on the POWs’ cholera susceptibility but that there were other crucial factors.

Hygiene and sanitation of AIF

Judging from various sources, including POWs' diaries, memoirs and the Japanese report, Tanio's testimony that all the F Force men were inoculated against cholera in Kanchanaburi and Nieke should be given credibility. Accordingly, Tanio's statement that the inoculations' efficacy was never perfect is convincing. In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) published a paper entitled “Cholera vaccines: WHO position paper”, in which it is stated that:

An injectable whole-cell parenteral vaccine formerly prepared from phenol-inactivated strains of *V. cholerae* is no longer in use because of its low efficacy

and adverse side-effects.⁷⁸³

It is fairly certain that, as of 1943, the efficacy of cholera inoculation was never perfect. Regarding the prevention of the disease, both Tanio and the WHO insist that safe water supply and proper sanitation are essential. Thus, it is assumed that F Force camps' filthy conditions were the primary cause of the cholera epidemic and 637 deaths from the disease.

Thus, it is reasonable that the Australian discipline of hygiene and sanitation saved more Australian men. Hearder argues that the Australian medical officers were well prepared for 'outback' medicine such as hygiene and sanitary provisions, which was helpful in their captivity.⁷⁸⁴ In contrast, Australian doctors had their weakness in dealing with tropical diseases. According to Hearder, although most medical students had to take a basic education in tropical medicine in Australia, it was still regarded as relatively unimportant. The AIF provided the medical officers with only a short course of the subject before embarkation, and thus some of them received little training. Thus, it was the Australian education of hygiene and sanitation that made the difference. Besides, Hearder points out that the vast majority of the Australian medical officers in the Japanese captivity were militarily inexperienced and that "it facilitated greater flexibility of approach in the conditions of captivity."⁷⁸⁵

Regarding the British army, Gill points out, at the time of the capitulation, British medical officers in Singapore were doctors from the RAMC, including both the regular and the conscripted, the Territorial Army, the Federal Malay States Volunteer Force, the Strait Settlement Volunteer Force, and the Indian Medical Service. Thus, their training and experiences varied significantly, especially on tropical infections.⁷⁸⁶ Besides the miscellany, the British medical organisations were not as flexible as those of the Australians. Thus, while the Australian medical

⁷⁸³ WHO, 'Cholera Vaccines: WHO Position Paper', in *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, 92.34 (2017), p.485.

⁷⁸⁴ Hearder, p.51.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.56-57.

⁷⁸⁶ Gill, op. cit., p.16.

officers could blanket the men with a sense of hygiene and sanitation in any circumstances, the British medical officers could not. The organisational problem of the British will be discussed later.

Crimes and Rackets

Indeed, the British lower-level attention to hygiene and sanitation came from their lack of appropriate education and organisation, but it was worsened by the deterioration of their morale and morality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ullmann witnessed such a state of Sonkrai No.2, where Dillon, the British Senior Officer, roared out and scolded the men for their low morale and lack of morality. In fact, various rackets were seen in the camp, which might have made a difference in the cholera mortality between Sonkrai No.2 and Lower Sonkrai despite their similar circumstances. Notably, the official reports on F Force did not mention such POWs' misconducts, whereas ex-POWs often described various crimes and rackets in their camps in their memoirs.

For instance, in his memoirs, Ullmann points out that the cremating party stripped dead bodies of cholera and sold the clothing to the labourers.⁷⁸⁷ Tanio's testimony that the POWs kept their boots on the floor in their huts to prevent theft implies that theft was rampant in the camps. Ullmann states that at Sonkrai No.2, POWs often stole rice for self-consumption as they were craving for it above all things.⁷⁸⁸ Regarding such crimes and villainy among the POWs, Ullmann explains that "The pressure to survive blunted the finer points of ethics."⁷⁸⁹ In other words, such disgraceful acts of the British were mainly due to the shortage of food in the camp. Ullmann's rank as an NCO or his position as an interpreter might have made his view somewhat impartial and objective.

Both the selling of cholera victims' clothes and the thefts of comrades' items indicate that there was a black market in the camp. Ullmann states that the Japanese prohibited the POWs from cooking in their huts to stop the black market

⁷⁸⁷ Stewart, p.96.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., p.104.

in the camp, but the rules were made to be broken in the camp.⁷⁹⁰ In the trial, Banno testified that:

I permitted fires to be lit in the huts so that prisoners of war could dry their clothes when they came back from work and also to keep them warm. Also, that may serve as a light.⁷⁹¹

Thus, even though the Japanese prohibited the POWs from cooking in their huts, the permission to light fires in the huts made it possible for the POWs to cook foods obtained in the black market. Accordingly, the vicious circle of the black market, theft, and the aggravation of health conditions continued.

In the black market, the POWs traded with Asian labourers as local vendors rarely turned up in the area of Sonkrai. Ullmann describes in his memoirs how the Japanese found the existence of the black market as follows:

[The Japanese] found proof of our villainy when they observed that the limited number of blankets which, after much discussion and pleading on our part, they had released to us, had disappeared: along with perfectly serviceable British Army clothing, the blankets turned up during a search of the coolie lines. At night we shivered, and during the day we walked about practically naked. Food, however, was the paramount need."⁷⁹²

The POWs' life without blankets and clothes must have affected their health conditions. Moreover, although the contact between the POWs and the labourers was strictly restricted for the risk of spreading diseases, the rules were ignored. The official reports did not mention the black market worsening the hygiene, sanitation and POWs' health conditions in the camps.

Notably, Korean guards of the camps were involved in the black market. The fact that Korean guards were selling goods to the POWs came to light when a party

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Banno's testimony, p.488.

⁷⁹² Stewart, p.104.

of ten British POWs escaped from Sonkrai No.2. Ullmann recalls that:

The Koreans were extremely upset. Those on guard duty thought they would be decapitated; all realised that they had been helping the escapees by selling them tinned food and changing, at a nice profit, Thai money for Burmese. They were reinforced by an officer and twenty men, all Japanese.⁷⁹³

Also in Australian camps, Korean guards were selling goods to the POWs for their profit. Rickwood testified that Japanese comfort supplies could be bought privately for 8 Tinkles a tin of tinned fish.⁷⁹⁴

The black market and the profit from it brought about corruption. Surprisingly, Ullmann reveals in his memoirs that certain NCOs were bribed to drop bribers from working parties, which resulted in a sick man having to take the place of a fitter and wealthier man.⁷⁹⁵

Theft continued even after the POWs were transferred to the Tambaya Hospital Camp. Ullmann states that even in the hospital camp, the number of crimes rose among the POWs, although not as frequent as the working camps., and that “Every effort was made to put down theft. As self-respect had widely vanished, we resorted to physical punishment and public humiliation.”⁷⁹⁶ These facts were often omitted in the official reports, although they were factors for the POWs’ worsened physical conditions.

Military hierarchy and bond

The Australian men’s strong bond and flexibility are thought to be another factor for their lower mortality in the F Force camps. In this section, the cultural difference between the British and the Australians will be explained.

One of the British army's main characteristics in those days was the privileged status of officers, particularly combatant officers. Medical officers were placed in

⁷⁹³ Ibid., p.111.

⁷⁹⁴ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood’s testimony, p.406.

⁷⁹⁵ Stewart, pp.104-5.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., p.137.

a slightly different position. Gill quotes Mark Harrison, a military historian, saying that British combatant officers “continued to look upon military doctors as their social inferiors and medical arrangements were seldom a priority.”⁷⁹⁷ Gill points out that the British army offered civilian doctors a promotion to Captain after a years’ service to recruit civilian doctors to the RAMC, and that “It is perhaps not surprising that career army officers regarded many medical officers as unprofessional, ill-trained, and not deserving of their elevated rank.”⁷⁹⁸

The Australian medical officers were in similar circumstances to the British. As Header puts it, "Having automatically become officers with the rank of captain by virtue of their professional status, medical officers mostly possessed only rudimentary military training."⁷⁹⁹ Thus, in a military operation, Australian medical officers had no authority or expectations in the command structure except for their medical domain. However, Header argues that “in captivity, the role of medical officers was of such heightened significance that they assumed a much great degree of authority.”⁸⁰⁰ Header explains the Australian medical officers’ heightened status during their captivity with an Australian military culture: once captured by the enemy, the servicemen ‘ceased to be soldiers’.⁸⁰¹ In other words, in their captivity, the Australian combatant officers regarded their military roles as ceased. On the other hand, the medical officers continued their duty as doctors throughout their captivity. Therefore, the combatant officers, ready to adapt themselves to their men’s needs, allowed and even encouraged the medical officers’ authority to be heightened. Thus, regarding the difference between the British and the Australians, Header points out that “Only by allowing some flexibility in the POW military hierarchy would more men survive. In many ways this contrasted with the British in captivity.”⁸⁰²

Header’s view about the Australian flexibility can be endorsed by the new

⁷⁹⁷ Mark Harrison quoted in Gill, *op. cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁹⁸ Gill, *op. cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁹⁹ Header, p.35.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, p.242

‘Wardmaster system’ adopted in F Force camp hospitals. The ‘Wardmaster system’ is reported in the Huston report as the system to place a combatant officer in each hut of the camp hospitals for discipline and detailed administrative arrangements. The report says that the system was adopted at Lower Sonkrai, Sonkrai No.2, Upper Sonkrai, Tambaya and Kanchanaburi. The system had advantages in making the hospitals work more smoothly and efficiently. The report states that:

- (a) It relieved the medical staff of much non-medical work, e.g. wood, water, feeding, discipline, returns, disposal of effects.
- (b) ensured continuous supervision – which medical officers were unable to do.
- (c) shared the heavy responsibility of the care of the sick with Medical officers and kept the whole camp informed of current difficulties and the progress of patients.⁸⁰³

Notably, the ‘Wardmaster system’ was first adopted at Lower Sonkrai by Major Bruce Hunt, the Australian senior medical officer, who gave “his energy and enthusiasm in training many officers in this work.”⁸⁰⁴ Hunt later moved to the Tambaya Hospital Camp in Burma to supervise the medical affairs. In short, the Australian flexibility in the military structure made it possible to adopt the new advantageous system and to find a new role for the combatant officers in the camps.

Nevertheless, it is also true that until the new system was adopted, even the AIF combatant officers did not work for camp hospitals. Unlike other railway camps, the F Force officers were exempt from work. Thus, in the trial, Rickwood, an AIF quartermaster, when questioned by the defence counsel whether there was any dissatisfaction towards officers among NCOs and men, answered that “None at all, except that the officers never had to work. That was the only objection.”⁸⁰⁵

In particular, the British officers were more likely to avoid their work in the

⁸⁰³ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Huston report, p.13.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Rickwood’s testimony, p.420.

camps than the Australian officers. As Hearder puts it, “one Australian doctor voiced his complaint that there was a group of British officers who were malingering in hospital, receiving full rations.”⁸⁰⁶ Similarly, Ullmann, a British NCO interpreter, states that “Some officers shammed illness in order to avoid working parties.”⁸⁰⁷

In contrast, according to Hearder, some Australian officers voluntarily joined working parties to save sick men. Moreover, the AIF officers ensured a fair distribution of the workload by organising men’s rotation on particular jobs and protested on behalf of the sick, often standing between the men and the guards. Thus, Hearder argues that “This was not common practice among British personnel.”⁸⁰⁸

These views on the British officers' attitude are rarely mentioned in the official reports compiled and submitted by the British officers to the British military authorities. However, these facts are revealed in memoirs, diaries and oral histories by the Australian servicemen and the British other ranks. The disparity in mortality between the British and the Australians can be attributed to the cultural factors lying between the two different Allied armies. To some extent, the higher death rate of the British POWs in the F Force camps was due in part to the British officers’ negligence.

Dysentery

Indeed, the IJA had a grave responsible for F Force’s high mortality. Nevertheless, were the Japanese staff liable to ‘criminal’ or ‘war criminal’ charges? In the trial of Banno and six others, Banno was sentenced to 3-years imprisonment and Tanio to 5-years imprisonment. These sentences could indicate that they were only responsible within the boundaries of what was possible. Thus, this section and the followings will look at what the Japanese did and failed to do to save the POWs’ lives.

The most severe threat to F Force was dysentery. Huston's report indicates the

⁸⁰⁶ Hearder, p.253.

⁸⁰⁷ Stewart, p.105.

⁸⁰⁸ Hearder, p.239.

numbers of deaths from dysentery as the table below:

Table.9: The Number of Deaths from Dysentery in F Force⁸⁰⁹

Cause of Death	British	Australians	Total	Peak (deaths)
Dysentery & Diarrhoea	640	192	832	Aug. 43 (261)
Dysentery & Beriberi	181	151	332	Oct. 43 (91)
Dysentery & Malaria	51	64	115	Sep. 43 (34)
Dysentery & Ulcers	49	52	101	Oct. 43 (28)

The peak of the dysentery deaths came after the cholera epidemic was put under control. What did the Japanese do to cope with dysentery? In the trial, Tanio testified that the POWs had been given inoculations against dysentery as well as cholera and typhoid at both Changi and Kanchanaburi. Moreover, Tanio stated that he had given the inoculations for the three diseases at Nieke again. Then, the prosecutor questioned why Major Hunt, a POW medical officer, had said in his statement that he had no anti-amoebic specifics to combat dysentery. Tanio answered that as the Japanese had already given a measure to prevent amoebic dysentery, it seemed that Major Hunt meant medicines for the treatment.⁸¹⁰ Judging from the prosecutor's question and Tanio's testimony, the Japanese put emphasis on disease prevention rather than treatment. Thus, Tanio distributed sufficient antiseptics to all the camps and told the POWs to wash their hands with the antiseptics before they had meals.⁸¹¹ Regarding dysentery prevention, Gill points out that the POW medical officers carried out fly control measures and encouraged personal hygiene measures such as hand washing.⁸¹² Thus, the lower mortality of the Australians from 'dysentery and diarrhoea' could be attributed to the matching of their hygiene consciousness with the preventive measures provided by the Japanese.

The Japanese tested all the F Force POWs to detect dysentery by a method

⁸⁰⁹ Huston report, Appendix 'A'.

⁸¹⁰ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio's testimony, p.538.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Gill, op. cit., p.25.

that the POWs often called 'glass rodding'. This method is mentioned in many diaries and memoirs of ex-POWs as well as in official reports. Gill describes this method as follows:

A bizarre but widespread response of the Japanese to dysentery was the practice of "glass rodding" or "bum-sticking". This was a form of screening for the disease involving lining up large groups of POWs, who would then have to bend down whilst the Japanese inserted glass rods into their rectums, and took the rods away "for examination". The practice had no scientific validity then or now, and it was doubtful whether anything was actually done with these specimens.⁸¹³

Moreover, Gill quotes Pte. Harry Howarth saying that "It was obviously just a propaganda exercise so that they could say they had tested POWs for dysentery infection."⁸¹⁴ However, despite Gill's negative account of the 'glass rodding', it was a common method for dysentery tests until the 1970s in Japan. It should be noted that the 'glass rodding' test was also conducted for the purpose of cholera detection. Owing to the test, Bradley was found to be a cholera carrier and was isolated to a cholera ward immediately. In the context of the cholera testing, Huston refers to the 'glass rodding' in his report as follows:

Anal swabbing in the search for carriers was done by the IJA. Carriers were placed in such isolation as they could be provided. Carriers and recovered cases were declared non-infectious after three negative stabblings at weekly intervals. The Force was inoculated with cholera vaccine at the onset.⁸¹⁵

While the POWs regarded the method as humiliation, the Japanese were serious in dealing with the diseases.

⁸¹³ Ibid., pp.102-3.

⁸¹⁴ Howarth quoted in Gill, op. cit., p.103.

⁸¹⁵ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Huston report, p.15.

Beriberi

Beriberi was the third largest cause of deaths in F Force. According to the Huston report, 413 died of beriberi: 279 were British, and 134 Australians. The peak of beriberi deaths was November 1943 with 111 deaths.⁸¹⁶ Both the Japanese and the POWs made various efforts to supply food containing Vitamin B1. For instance, the Japanese supplied beans in the food rations. Huston's report states that "The supply of beans in the IJA ration appeared to prevent rapid development, but this supply, unfortunately, fluctuated very considerably."⁸¹⁷ In the trial, Tanio testified that before June 1943, some quantity of beans were supplied to the POWs to prevent beriberi but that the supply stopped in June, and beriberi patients increased in number. Tanio explained that the beans issued to the POWs were part of stocks that had already been there before the monsoon broke. Thus, during the monsoon, the beans supply was cut because all the transport came to a standstill.⁸¹⁸

Here, it should be considered why the beriberi deaths of the British were twice as many as those of the Australians. As mentioned before, the Japanese made it a rule to reduce food rations by half for the sick POWs not working. However, according to Header, the reduction was not carried out among the Australians: "If the cookhouse received less food because of the number of non-working prisoners, that amount was still shared out equally among men."⁸¹⁹ This strong bond of the Australian troops – the Australian 'mateship' can be a factor for saving more Australian POWs from beriberi and other diseases.

K and L Forces

As the Japanese bore the responsibility for providing adequate medical supplies to the POWs, Banno attempted to remedy the difficult situation by asking for medical reinforcements. Hiroike states in his memoirs that, having seen the POWs' plight, Banno sent a wire to Commander Arimura of the Malaya POW Camp,

⁸¹⁶ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Huston report, Appendix 'A'.

⁸¹⁷ Huston report, p.17.

⁸¹⁸ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio's testimony, p.539.

⁸¹⁹ Header, p.234.

Singapore and requested additional medical units consisting of POW medical officers and orderlies.⁸²⁰ However, the new medical units did not reach the up-country camps where F Force awaited them. The medical units and supplies were consumed or taken by other POW camps on the way to the F Force camps.

Pavillard, a POW medical officer in the No.4 camp, recollects that he stole medical supplies from an unknown POW party going through the Wampo camp.

On 10 April, 1943, I was walking up towards the officers' hut to see Bob Lucas, the Adjutant of 'D' Battalion, who was down with malaria, when glancing down a jungle path I was surprised to see a strange party approaching. They were British POWs escorted by Jap guards and they were carrying heavy packages slung on long bamboo poles. There were eighteen of these packages and I saw with great surprise that they were field medical panniers of the standard army type.⁸²¹ [...] Then I scrambled up quite easily over the bamboo partition and into the rice store: the first pannier I opened was full of tins, each tin containing one thousand M. and B. 693 tablets. This was wonderful, as this particular drug was very effective with many tropical diseases. I placed a tin inside my tattered old shorts and tied the pannier up again, and then departed very quickly, with a bulge in front of me that must have made me look at least six months pregnant."⁸²²

Judging from the date of the theft, the POW party was not the reinforcement of F Force. However, it can be assumed that the same would happen to any party passing through camps.

Besides, Hiroike assumes that medical officers would attend sick POWs if asked for treatments in camps on their way. Furthermore, some POW camps in Thailand took some personnel of the new medical units under their command. Consequently, only a few reached Nieke. Thus, Hiroike states that the new medical units 'evaporated' on the way and that F Force was really an ill-fated

⁸²⁰ Hiroike, p.330.

⁸²¹ Pavillard, pp.115-6.

⁸²² Ibid., pp.116-7.

party.⁸²³

The POW authorities at Singapore named the reinforcement medical units K Force and L Force, respectively. After the war, the Allied Forces compiled reports on these units, according to which, K Force left Singapore on 25 June 1943 and L Force on 23 August 1943.

K Force, an Australian unit, consisted of 30 medical officers and 200 orderlies. The report on K Force states that:

A message was received via outside channels from Major Rogers AAMC who had left Changi with "F" Force, stating that cases of Cholera, dysentery, and malaria were numerous amongst P.W. in Thailand. Information also indicated that "K" Force was to proceed to this area therefore I.J.A. orders were disregarded and M&B 693 atebrin, quinine, surgical equipment and other bulk drugs were taken, also reserve rations and Red Cross supplies for the sick.⁸²⁴

If this unit had reached F Force, it could have been of great help to F Force. However, K Force was divided into three groups after arriving at Kanchanaburi. One was to remain in Kanchanaburi, another was to proceed to Wanyai (70 km), and the other was to proceed to Nieke.⁸²⁵ The Nieke party, which consisted of 12 officers and 48 other ranks, was commanded by Captain Frew. However, the report did not go into detail about the Nieke party. Instead, the report mentions that the Wanyai party proceeded to Takanun (121 km), stating that:

It was considered that there would be a greater chance of working with Australian troops by going to this area as information indicated that F and H Force AIF were working between Sonkrai 291 kilos and Kinsaiyok 90 kilos.

⁸²³ Hiroike, pp.330-332.

⁸²⁴ 'Report on A.I.F. "K" Force (Medical)', in Kratoska(ed.) *The Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1946: Documents and Selected Writings*, IV, p.90.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.,pp.90-93.

Conditions amongst these troops were apparently very bad with many cases of cholera, malaria and dysentery.⁸²⁶

Thus, it seems that despite their initial objective of attending F Force men in the up-country camps, K Force could not manage to reach there. The report explains that K Force was still under the command of the Malaya POW Camp, whereas the Thai POW Camp groups were well organised by their HQ and liaison officers and received better consideration in all matters such as supply and rations. In short, K Force was dependent mainly on individual Japanese from the Malaya POW Camps. The Japanese cooperated with the K Force POWs in attempting to improve conditions, but they could do little. As a result, as the report says, the majority of K Force was attached in ones and twos to labourers camps to provide medical attention and supervise hygiene and sanitation.⁸²⁷

L Force, commanded by Lt. Col. H.C. Benson, RAMC, consisted of 15 medical officers and 100 orderlies and went down the same path as K Force. According to the report on L Force, the IJA instructed the POW medical authorities at Singapore to issue an order that L Force should proceed up-country on 23 August 1943. The IJA explained that the Force was needed as a medical reinforcement up-country. The POW medical authorities thought that it might be to reinforce F Force.⁸²⁸ On 29 August 1943, L Force arrived in Kanchanaburi, where the Force was informed of railway camps' appalling conditions and the cholera epidemic there. Also, the Force learnt that K Force had been split into small groups, attending the labourers in the railway camps.⁸²⁹ The report states that, at first, 40 per cent of L Force was employed in POW hospitals, and the rest worked in labourers' hospitals, but eventually, all were employed in labourers' hospitals and camps.⁸³⁰

⁸²⁶ Ibid., p.94.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ H.C. Benson, 'Report on History of "L" Force POW Thailand', in Kratoska(ed.) *The Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1946: Documents and Selected Writings*, IV, p.118.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., p.119.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., p.120.

The cases of K and L Forces show how difficult it was to proceed up-country without the support of the Thai POW Camp. Notably, F and H Forces faced the same difficulty when marching up-country without the Thai POW Camp's support.

Conclusion

F Force was indeed the most unfortunate POW party as more than 3,000 out of 7,000 men lost their lives on the railway. Nevertheless, this chapter revealed that this fact could be seen from various perspectives. The F Force men's medical treatment was far from satisfactory, but the POW medical officers and the Japanese F Force staff did everything within their power. The reality of the situation delineated in this chapter is far from what Wild called 'criminal negligence'. The sentences meted out to Banno and Tanio support the fact that there are views other than the British officers'. Wild's 'authoritative' account the Prosecution employed in the courtroom only reflects the British officers' account. Views of British other ranks, Australian servicemen, medical officers and Japanese servicemen are often omitted from it. This chapter has shown that their different views are essential to ascertain what happened to F Force, and the officers' reports should be examined with other perspectives.

After Harris left for Singapore in December 1943, F Force's POW Command at Kanchanaburi was requested by the *Kempeitai* to submit a frank report on the conditions of the Force and their suggestions to improve the conditions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dillon submitted the report, which is known as the Dillon report. Nevertheless, the Harris report reveals that the Dillon report was co-authored by Dillon and Wild.⁸³¹ Notably, the Dillon report is the Appendix 'A' to the Harris report, which has seven appendices. Presumably, the Dillon report, in other words, Wild's view had some influence on the Harris report.

It is noteworthy that the Dillon report mentions officers' labour of other Forces. The report states that:

There were not many occasions when officers of this party were made to

⁸³¹ TNA PRO WO208/3258, Harris report, para.102, p.23-24.

labour, but it was known to all of us that many hundreds of officers in other parties were forced to work as labourers on road and railway construction in organised gangs. This treatment of officer prisoners of war is without precedent in the whole history of modern war, besides being a direct breach of the Hague Convention. It will not be forgotten or forgiven for a hundred years.⁸³²

This statement indicates two facts: unlike other Forces, F Force's officers were not forced to work; and the British officers would stick resolutely to their status. Accordingly, their official reports did not mention their own problems in explaining why more British POWs died than Australians in F Force. Thus, this chapter reviewed the officers' account by hearing the voices from other ranks, low-ranking officers, Australian servicemen, and their captors.

Also, this chapter found how differently the British and the Australians behaved in the same circumstance and what made such a difference. The study of F Force made it possible to find the difference between the two Allied armies. At the same time, F Force's extreme situation revealed that the medical officers had a different perspective from combatant officers' in their captivity. Indeed, the F Force men had diverse views, which a single 'authoritative' account cannot represent.

At the same time, F Force cannot represent all the POWs on the railway. Thus, the following chapter will deal with the 'F Force factor', which owes its influence to Wild's 'authoritative' account. No matter how tragic, F Force's experience cannot speak for the 60,000 POWs on the railway as their environments and experiences varied by times and locations. However, the extreme experience of F Force gained its position at the centre of the Burma-Thailand Railway's history owing to Wild. Thus, the credibility of Wild's account should be scrutinised.

⁸³² TNA PRO WO208/3258, Dillon report, 'Report on Prisoners of War in Thailand: May to December 1943'. Appendix 'A' to Harris report.

Chapter 7: War Crimes Trials and Wild

Introduction

After the war, Major Wild returned home to England in December 1945. However, the War Crimes Headquarters in London wanted Wild to return to Singapore to use his experience and knowledge for the war crimes investigation team. Thus, as a colonel, Wild returned to Singapore on 16 February 1946 and was appointed War Crimes Liaison Officer. Wild was in charge of all war crimes investigations in Singapore and Malaya and had three war crimes investigation teams under his command. Moreover, Wild produced evidence by himself against the Japanese responsible for the deaths of more than 3,000 POWs of F Force.⁸³³ Wild interrogated the Japanese war crimes suspects and collected information, which substantiated charges against the suspects. After returning to Singapore, Wild wrote to his family that "The work is great fun, and just what I wanted."⁸³⁴ There is no doubt that Wild vigorously worked for the war crimes trials.

Since Wild gave evidence in trials in Singapore and the War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo, the British war crimes authorities regarded him as a competent investigator with his fluent Japanese and knowledge obtained in the captivity. Accordingly, Wild's account of the POWs' hardships on the Burma-Thailand Railway gained an 'authoritative' status. However, the way in which the 'authoritative' account was formed generates a simple concern: Wild's view may be biased because he, a victim and a witness of the Japanese war crimes, could control the investigation teams, interrogate suspects, interpret their words, and give evidence to the court. The considerable power conferred on Wild probably made him state that "The work is great fun." Thus, in this chapter, the evidence that Wild produced for the trials will be examined to trace how his account was formed. Accordingly, this chapter will ascertain what problem his evidence may have and find out whether his 'authoritative' account has validity.

⁸³³ Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.105.

⁸³⁴ Wild's letter quoted in Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.106.

Trial of Aoki

As F Force's senior interpreter, Wild could witness the alleged war crimes the Japanese committed against the Force members. At the same time, Wild was one of the victims. Thus, an unusual situation occurred in which a victim of a crime could act as a witness, an interpreter and an investigator. Accordingly, there was room for arbitrariness in interpreting events or translating the Japanese statements. The trial of Sergeant Toshio Aoki was such a case. In this section, how Wild manipulated the statement of the accused will be delineated.

The trial of Aoki was held in Singapore on 11 February 1946: the president of the court was Lt. Colonel Coleman, Department of the JAG in India; The prosecutor was Captain Hibbert, and the defence counsel was Major Mursell. The charge against Aoki was as follows:

Committing a war crime, in that he at Sonkrai Camp in the month of November 1943 in violation of the laws and usages of war by forcing some three hundred British prisoners of war at that time in his custody the majority of whom were sick and injured to enter a train containing no sufficient or suitable accommodation and by allowing Korean soldiers under his command to beat, kick and otherwise maltreat the said prisoners, causing the death of seven of the said prisoners and further injured the health of the remainder.⁸³⁵

In the opening address, the prosecutor contended that Aoki forced 300 British POWs in his custody to enter a train without sufficient or proper accommodation and harmed the POWs' health: consequently, seven died.

According to the prosecutor, the IJA POW camp authorities ordered Aoki to transfer the POWs from Sonkrai to Kanchanaburi. Therefore, Aoki ordered Wild to prepare for the transfer. Wild made all the necessary arrangements, ascertaining where the train would stop, how many wagons would be there, and how the POWs party should be split into suitable groups for the trucks. Aoki was entirely satisfied with the arrangements when Wild reported having finished the preparation.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁵ TNA PRO WO235/817, Charge Sheet, Trial of Toshio Aoki.

⁸³⁶ TNA PRO WO235/817, Prosecution's opening address, p.1.

However, the train stopped 100 yards down the line, where the entraining began. The prosecutor argued:

The accused seemed to have lost all control over himself and his guards. The scene which followed is described in all its sordid details by Major Wild in his Affidavit.⁸³⁷

[...]

The evidence for the prosecution is brief and consists of an Original Affidavit by Major Wild and subject to admission the confession of the accused.⁸³⁸

Notably, Wild was deeply involved in making Aoki's statement. Ostensibly, the statement was taken by Lt. Colonel L.F.G. Pritchard, the Royal Fusiliers, O.C. "E" Group, South, whose job was the investigation of war crimes and the interrogation of suspects. Pritchard testified in the trial that: he had taken Aoki's statement at the end of September or the beginning of October 1945 without any caution before taking it, or any threat or inducement; when Aoki finished making his statement, it was read out as each sentence was taken.⁸³⁹ Thus, the court questioned Pritchard whether Aoki's statement was made freely and voluntarily and written down in Aoki's presence, and Pritchard answered that it was.⁸⁴⁰ Seemingly, there was no problem in producing Aoki's statement as evidence.

However, the defence counsel questioned Pritchard whether he spoke Japanese. Pritchard's answer was no. Then, the defence counsel questioned how Pritchard could be sure that the statement had been read out. Pritchard answered that because he knew Wild could speak Japanese well. Moreover, Pritchard testified that he had no information about whether Aoki had been told that he was not bound to answer the questions.⁸⁴¹ Pritchard's testimony implies that Wild took the initiative in the interrogation of Aoki.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., p.2.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ TNA PRO WO235/817, Pritchard's testimony, p.3.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

In his sworn statement, Wild states that on 13 October 1945, he saw Aoki in Outram Road Prison, Singapore and interrogated him. Aoki made his statement with Wild's translation and dictation. Pritchard wrote down the statement, which Wild read back to Aoki. Then, Aoki signed with a thumbprint on each page of the statement in Wild's presence. Wild states that he produced the statement with a pencil and wrote at the end with his signature that "I certify that the above is a true translation of Sergeant Aoki's confession dictated to me by him in Outram Road prison on 13 October 1945."⁸⁴²

The interrogation certainly took place. Aoki testified that he remembered making a statement in prison, interrogated by the two British officers, one of whom was a major and the other a lieutenant colonel. However, in the trial, Aoki's testimony went off in a different direction from his statement taken by the British officers.

The defence counsel questioned Aoki whether he was told that he did not need to say anything to them before making the statement. Aoki answered that he was not. For some reason, Aoki thought he was bound to answer the questions asked by the British officers. The defence counsel asked Aoki whether his confession was read out to him. Aoki answered it was. However, Aoki testified that what he had confessed was different from what he heard in the courtroom. Then, the defence counsel questioned Aoki whether the statement represented what he had said or meant when it was read over to him at the interrogation. Aoki answered that when read for him, it was what he stated.⁸⁴³ Thus, the trial proceeded based on Wild's statement and Aoki's statement taken and translated by Wild until an unforeseen situation arose.

In the cross-examination of Aoki, the prosecutor argued that:

What I am suggesting is that the witness has told an untruth when he said that he did not see any beating or hitting. Why he told the Defending Officer that he did not see any hitting or beating when in the statement he says it was at my orders that the Koreans had forced all the sick men to the wagons and

⁸⁴² TNA PRO WO235/817, Exhibit D, Aoki's statement.

⁸⁴³ TNA PRO WO235/817, Aoki's testimony, p.4.

the Koreans hit and beat the sick men?⁸⁴⁴

Aoki answered that he had never made such a statement and that it was not read out for him in the interrogation. After the prosecutor's cross-examination, the court began to question the accused and started checking the facts mentioned in Aoki's statement.

The court questioned Aoki whether he remembered striking sick and dying men. Aoki's answer was 'no'. Also, the court asked Aoki whether he remembered saying in his statement that there had been too few fit men to help so many sick men. Aoki answered that he did not say so. Then, the court asked if it was read to him. The answer was 'no'. Then, the court said, "So that if it is in the statement, it was put in afterwards by the two officers?" Aoki answered that "I do not understand English. So, anyway, when it was read for me, it was not mentioned."⁸⁴⁵ Thus, the court asked whether it was not read to him in English. Aoki answered it was read in Japanese.

The court continued checking facts in Aoki's statement. The court questioned Aoki whether he remembered saying that "I failed in my duty by not controlling this matter at all." Aoki answered that he had never said so. The court asked Aoki if he had stated that "the Koreans hit and kicked sick men and shouted at them." Aoki answered 'no'. Then, the court asked if there was not very much in the statement that Aoki had stated. Aoki answer that:

I stated about the speed required in order to get on the train within 20 minutes. Also, I stated that Major Wild had asked on that occasion to control the Koreans not to beat the prisoners and so I did.⁸⁴⁶

Then, the court questioned Aoki if he had made a statement that he had controlled the Koreans? Aoki answered 'yes'. Moreover, the court asked Aoki whether he had said that the Koreans had hit the sick men and shouted at them. Aoki answered

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., p.11.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p.11.

that he had never stated or seen any of such. Then, the court said, "If the 2 officers said that he did say so then they are lying?" Aoki answered that "I did not order any Koreans to beat or anything of that action."⁸⁴⁷

Again, the court asked whether Aoki stated that the Koreans had hit and kicked the sick men and shouted at them in his statement. Aoki answered to the court that when Major Wild questioned him if he had seen the Koreans' brutality, Aoki answered that he had not. Once again, the court repeated the same question, and Aoki answered 'no'. Then, the court asked Aoki whether he had stated that the Koreans had filled the trucks with the POWs until they were completely crammed and had still tried to force the men in. Aoki said, "No, I did not say so." Again, the court questioned Aoki whether he stated in the statement that the Koreans had been shouting and hitting the POWs to make them get inside. Aoki answered that he did not.⁸⁴⁸

Thus, a question arises as to who told a lie, Aoki or Wild. Although it is difficult to confirm who it might be, at least an examination should be made. Wild's statement and Aoki's testimony in the trial will be compared and analysed in the next section.

Wild's statement vs Aoki's testimony

According to Aoki's testimony, he arrived in Thailand on 15 July 1943 and moved to Sonkrai early in November 1943.⁸⁴⁹ Wild's statement says that Aoki was with a sub-detachment of "F" Force until November, working south of the railway under Captain Moriyama's command. Wild was not with this sub-detachment as it consisted of 500 Australians under Lt. Colonel Pond, AIF. In November, the sub-detachment led by Pond moved north up to Sonkrai where Wild was stationed.⁸⁵⁰ At this point, there was no discrepancy between Wild's account and Aoki's.

Aoki testified that his duty at Sonkrai was to send 300 POWs from Sonkrai to Nieke, and he requested 12 trucks to transport the POWs. Aoki's initial plan was

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., p.6.

⁸⁵⁰ TNA PRO WO235/817, Exhibit C, Wild's statement, p.1.

that: 10 trucks were to transport 300 men equally, that is, 30 men in each truck; the remaining two were for the sick and baggage. However, Aoki was told that 10 trucks were to be given. Then, Aoki was informed that there would be no stopping until Nieke and directed to gather the POWs in front of the camp to entrain. Aoki requested that the train stop at the POWs' entrainment point; otherwise, they would have to walk.⁸⁵¹

According to Wild's statement, on an unknown date in November, Aoki ordered the POWs to get ready to evacuate the camp in three hours as a train was coming. With the assistance of Huston, RAMC, the POWs managed to get ready. Wild positioned the POWs groups at intervals along the railway line where he had been told that the train would stop. Each truck was to contain 25 men. All the POWs were extremely emaciated and suffering from the combined effects of some diseases and starvation. Many of them were unable to stand unaided, and there were many stretcher cases. Wild lit bamboo fires along the track to illuminate the entrainment as the train was late and it got dark.⁸⁵²

In the trial, the defence counsel questioned Aoki whether he had taken any measures to ensure the POWs' rapid and easy movement to get on board. Aoki answered that due to Wild's ideas, the POWs were separated into groups to entrain easily, and campfires were prepared as the train's arrival was expected to be after dark.⁸⁵³ Thus, no discrepancy has been found yet between the two except for the number of stretchers. According to Aoki's testimony, only two needed stretchers, and 100 out of the 300 men were lightly or moderately sick unable to carry their baggage; the rest was all right.⁸⁵⁴

Wild reported the completion of the preparation to Aoki. According to Wild, having heard the report from Wild, Aoki thanked him, standing on top of a shallow cutting through which the railway line ran. Then, Wild told Aoki that:

Look here Sergeant Aoki; you know how these Koreans are on a train journey.

⁸⁵¹ Aoki's testimony, p.6.

⁸⁵² Wild's statement, pp.1-2.

⁸⁵³ Aoki's testimony, p.6.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

These prisoners are very sick men, and you must allow me time to entrain them properly. We will put all the gear into the trucks first so that the sick can lie on them. I will be responsible for the entrainment. Please tell the Koreans not to interfere.⁸⁵⁵

Aoki replied, 'Understood'. However, when the train arrived, it was four trucks shorter than expected to be. Moreover, the train went down 100 yards beyond the entrainment point to take the water supply. Then, Aoki began to shout: "Entrain! Entrain!" in Japanese, which was, in turn, shouted by the Korean guards at the POWs. The Koreans began to urge the POWs, "first by pushing, then by beating them with rifle butts."⁸⁵⁶ Therefore, Wild ran to Aoki on the cutting and said, "This is no good. You must tell the train to come back when it has finished watering." However, Aoki, who appeared to be out of his mind with rage, stopped him from reaching the mound's top by striking at him with a stick. Then, Aoki said, "Shut Up!" in Japanese and continued to shout "Entrain". Wild states that "From the top of his mound, and in the light of the fires, the actions of the guards and the movements of the prisoners were plainly visible and audible."⁸⁵⁷ Thus, Wild ran to the engine driver and asked him to bring the train back to the entrainment point where the POWs were. However, the driver refused. The POWs managed to crawl up to the train, urged by the Koreans with kicks and blows to entrain. Then, the Koreans began to lift the sick POWs from the ground and hurled them into the trucks. Next, the Koreans started to throw the heavy gear on top of them. Wild states that he did his best to bring order out of chaos, to control the Koreans by words and by pushing them away, and that all this time, Aoki "continued to stand on his mound, watching the scene and shouting "Entrain! Quickly! quickly!"⁸⁵⁸

Aoki's account is quite different from Wild's. According to Aoki's testimony, there were only eight trucks when the train arrived because two were derailed and

⁸⁵⁵ Wild's statement, p.2.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.2-3.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., p.3.

left behind. Then, five trains stopped precisely on the spot where they were expected, but three trains went far ahead to receive water supply. Thus, Aoki asked the train's chief, a staff sergeant, to come to the right place, but he refused it because it was a twenty-minute stop, and they needed twenty minutes to have the water supply. As the POWs had to entrain in 20 minutes, Aoki ordered healthy POWs to get on the three trucks that went far ahead, and the sick men and baggage on the five trucks at the entrainment point. According to Aoki, for the sick to get on board smoothly, specific steps were prepared. Moreover, Aoki ordered the healthy POWs to load the baggage into the trucks first so that the sick could sit on it.⁸⁵⁹ To solve the shortage of two trucks, Aoki decided to load more healthy POWs in one truck and put the stretcher cases in a truck with fewer POWs. Aoki told them that the journey would be only one hour and asked them to bear the inconvenience. Consequently, six trucks had thirty men each, another truck had twenty-two, and the other had fifty-eight healthy men on board, among whom Wild was. Thus, forty had to be left behind, but fortunately, they were soon picked up by another train, although Aoki could not report to the camp that the forty men were left behind.⁸⁶⁰

Wild also states that as the trucks became full, some forty POWs had to be left behind and that Wild detached a few officers to take care of them. According to Wild's statement, he got into the truck of fifty-eight men, in which two stretchers were laid on the floor. One patient on a stretcher had had his leg amputated two days before, and thus most of the men had to stand rigidly.⁸⁶¹ Wild states that three hours later, the train stopped at Nieke, where he saw Aoki again. The forty POWs who had been left behind at Sonkrai arrived at Nieke twenty minutes later. According to Wild, at this stop, Wild was permitted to reduce the POWs in the train. They continued the four-day journey to Kanchanaburi without Aoki. Wild argues in his statement that:

After leaving Nieke and during the journey, 7 of my sick men died. Their

⁸⁵⁹ Aoki's testimony, p.7.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., p.8.

⁸⁶¹ Wild's statement, p.3.

death was undoubtedly caused or hastened by the treatment received at the time of entrainment and by the conditions of travel. For all of this, the accused was responsible. He was the senior Japanese soldier at the entrainment point.⁸⁶²

According to Aoki's testimony, however, this train was to terminate at Nieke, where the POWs were to change for another train, and Aoki's duty finished. Aoki testified that since Nieke was the base of the railway transport, and there was a considerable distance between Nieke and Kanchanaburi, it was arranged that the POWs were to have a more comfortable journey from Nieke. Indeed, on their arrival at Nieke after a one-and-a-half-hour journey, the camp staff were already waiting for them with trucks and food for the next journey, which the Pay Master Sergeant arranged at Nieke. The 40 POWs left behind came twenty minutes after the main party. Aoki saw the train leaving Nieke. Thus, responding to Wild's allegation that seven men died on the way from Nieke to Kanchanaburi because of Aoki's mismanagement, Aoki testified that he did not know about their deaths and that he had made the healthy POWs stand on board and kept the sick lying, which was the best he could do for them.⁸⁶³

Problems of Wild

Both correspondences and discrepancies were found between Wild's statement and Aoki's testimony. Importantly, there were two points in dispute – the Korean guards' conduct and the treatment of stretcher cases. As for the Korean guards, Aoki testified that there were fifty Korean guards under his command and that he never saw the guards beating or ill-treating the POWs during the entrainment. On the other hand, Wild accuses in his statement that the Koreans drove the sick with their rifle butts. Regarding the stretcher cases, Wild states that the stretchers were put in the truck of fifty-eight men, whereas Aoki testified that the stretchers were in the truck of twenty-two men. Despite Wild's allegation that Aoki's order caused seven deaths on the way to Kanchanaburi from Nieke, Aoki was found guilty with

⁸⁶² Wild's statement, p.3.

⁸⁶³ Aoki's testimony, p.9.

an exception by omitting the words “Caused the death of seven of the said prisoners” from his charge. Consequently, Aoki was sentenced to 3-year imprisonment.⁸⁶⁴

Although Aoki's trial is a small case, it significantly indicates how difficult it is to try someone with a language barrier. In the trial, Aoki's testimony was entirely different from his statement translated and written down with a pencil by Wild. The prosecution's evidence was based on the two documents – Aoki's statement and Wild's affidavit. However, the court found that Aoki's statement contained what he had not told at the interrogation, although Aoki testified that his statement had been read out correctly in Japanese by Wild.

The discrepancies suggest three possibilities; Aoki told a lie, Wild told a lie, or Wild's Japanese language ability was unsatisfactory. None can be ruled out. This problem was caused by allowing a victim and witness of an alleged crime to investigate the case, interrogate the suspect, translate his statement with a pencil, and submit it to the court as primary evidence. Thus, a suspicion that Wild tampered Aoki's statement cannot be ruled out.

On 10 September 1946, seven months after Aoki's trial, in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, Wild testified as a prosecution witness about the entrainment incident at Sonkrai. The testimony was basically on the same line with his statement used in Aoki's trial. However, in the tribunal, Wild did not accuse Aoki of the seven POWs' deaths. Instead, Wild testified what the IJA ordered at Nieke as follows:

There the Japanese medical officer gave me an order that I was not to bury any man who died. I told him that if we were likely to be on the train for three or four days, that a number of men were certain to die. He gave the order to the Japanese guards, the Korean guards, that I was not to bury anyone.

[...]

I told him he was a disgrace to the Japanese Army. Altogether seven of my men died between Niki and Kanchanaburi. I disposed of six of the bodies to other prisoner of war camps along the line. There was no prisoner of war

⁸⁶⁴ TNA PRO WO235/817, Finding and sentence of Aoki's trial.

camp when the seventh man died. So I took him out of the train and buried him myself.⁸⁶⁵

In fact, a perjury suspicion in this testimony emerged later in the trial of Banno and six others, which was held after Wild's death.

Wild vs Tanio

In Banno and six others' trial, several discrepancies were found between the testimony of Tanio, the Japanese chief medical officer of F Force, and Wild's statement. Although Wild was dead, his statement was submitted to the court as evidence for the prosecution. In his statement, Wild accused Tanio of his negligence in the medical treatment for the sick POWs.

In the courtroom, extracts of Wild's statement were read out. In his statement, Wild states, "Lt. TANIO never visited the sick in Lower Nieke camp where I remained for three weeks where I had first seen him."⁸⁶⁶ However, Tanio testified that he had not arrived at Lower Nieke when the F Force HQ was still located there: Tanio was still in Singapore. Then, the court read out another extract from Wild's statement that "Lt. TANIO apologised to me for his late arrival and promised to do his best for the sick. Therefore, Lt. TANIO never visited the sick at Lower Nieke camp where I had first seen him."⁸⁶⁷ Tanio responded that when he arrived at Lower Nieke, no one of F Force was there. Again, the court read out another extract that "Nor did he go to Sonkrai camp where I was stationed from the beginning of August until November 1943."⁸⁶⁸ Tanio denied the accusation. Then, the court questioned Tanio whether it was possible to visit Sonkrai without Wild's knowledge. Tanio answered that it was possible because Wild was staying in an ordinary hut and that, in fact, Tanio directly visited the sick without any

⁸⁶⁵ JACAR, Ref.A08071314400, 'Transcripts of Court Proceedings of International Military Tribunal for the Far East on Class A War Crimes (English), September 9 to 12, 1946 (Page 5111 to 5497)', p.5,484.

⁸⁶⁶ TNA PRO WO235/1034, Tanio's testimony, p.551.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

notice on several occupations.⁸⁶⁹

Next, the court questioned Tanio whether he remembered the incident of the POWs' trainload proceeding from Sonkrai to Kanchanaburi in November 1943; especially the fact that Wild had asked Tanio to inform the Korean guards that whenever a POW died, Wild was permitted to bury the body at the first stop. This incident was mentioned in Wild's statement. However, Tanio testified that he was on a different train from Wild's and thus did not know anything about the incident. Then, the court questioned Tanio whether he remembered that Wild had discussed with him the issue of unloading POWs' corpses from the train whenever it was possible. Tanio answered that he had no recollection of discussing the matter with Wild because Tanio talked with a POW medical officer about the matter. Before the departure, the POW medical officer and Tanio arranged that if anyone died before reaching Tamajo, where a meal was to be provided, the body should be buried there, and those who died after Tamajo would be taken to Kanchanaburi. It was because they did not have enough time or staff to undertake a burial in other stations. Tanio and the POW medical officer agreed to this arrangement at the beginning of the journey.⁸⁷⁰

Then, the court told Tanio that Wild had made an affidavit on 17 November 1945, stating that Tanio forbade him to bury the corpses and said that "This is not Japanese territory, this is Thailand, you cannot bury them here." Thus, the court asked Tanio whether he said so. Tanio's answered, 'no'. Again, the court questioned Tanio whether Wild told him that it was a disgrace to the IJA. Tanio answered that he had never heard that. In short, Wild states in his statement that Tanio forbade Wild to bury anyone until reaching Kanchanaburi, whereas Tanio testified that he had never talked with Wild about the disposal of the bodies, but it was the POW medical officer whom Tanio had discussed the matter with.⁸⁷¹ Indeed, Wild was not a medical officer.

At this point, at the request of the defence counsel, the court asked Tanio whether Wild was a competent Japanese speaker. Tanio answered that as far as he

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., p.553.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

was concerned, Wild was not sufficiently competent in Japanese.⁸⁷² Notably, Tanio testified that when he and the POW medical officer talked about the matter before their entrainment, the interpreter was not Wild but a POW Lance Corporal, whose name Tanio did not remember.⁸⁷³ Presumably, this interpreter was the other interpreter of F Force, John Stewart Ullmann.

Wild's image

Wild's Japanese language ability was also questioned in the Tokyo Tribunal. The defence counsel asked Wild to read a particular Japanese report on POWs, and Wild answered that "since my dictionary was confiscated in the early stages of my captivity, I was not so good at reading Japanese as I was before the war."⁸⁷⁴ Judging from Wild's testimony and Tanio's, Wild's Japanese language ability seems to have been at an intermediate level at best. However, Wild was believed to be proficient in Japanese among the POWs. For instance, Captain Laird states in his memoirs as follows:

[Wild] had gone to Japan in pre-war years for the Rising Sun Petroleum Company (in other words "Shell") and while there had done a 2-year interpreter's course on which he had learnt not only day-to-day Japanese but also the language of the Imperial Japanese Court. The ability to speak this form of Japanese seemed to give him an immediate psychological ascendancy over the ordinary Japanese officers: nevertheless, he showed outstanding coverage in dealing with the Nips who were under clear orders to get the Railway finished on time – or else!⁸⁷⁵

It is unknown how Laird obtained such information, but it is almost certain that

⁸⁷² Ibid.

⁸⁷³ Ibid., p.554.

⁸⁷⁴ JACAR, Ref.A08071314600, 'Transcripts of Court Proceedings of International Military Tribunal for the Far East on Class A War Crimes (English), September 13 to 18, 1946 (Page 5498 to 5827)' p.5,791.

⁸⁷⁵ Laird, pp.91-2.

the reputation of Wild's Japanese proficiency was inflated to a large degree. Such an inflated reputation might have made Wild's role seem more significant than what it was.

For instance, regarding the Japanese reaction to the POWs' escape at Sonkrai No.2, Laird states that "I suspect that the Nips' relatively muted reaction to the affairs was partly due to Cyril Wild's skill in handling the Nips."⁸⁷⁶ Bradley was among those who escaped from the camp and later recaptured with three other colleagues. Thus, having thought Wild saved his life, Bradley also praised his handling of the Japanese in the biography of Wild. In the biography, Bradley states that:

Senior British officers, among whom was Cyril Wild, were brought to Nieke to witness our execution. With his usual quick appreciation of the situation, Cyril acted immediately and warned Col. Banno of the everlasting disgrace his action would bring upon the Emperor and the Imperial Japanese Army if he personally allowed the execution to take place.⁸⁷⁷

Also, in his memoirs, Bradley states as follows:

[Wild] spoke Japanese with such fluency that he was able to reduce Col. Banno to tears by impressing on him the disgrace and shame that he would bring upon the Emperor and the Imperial Japanese Army if he allowed the execution of what he termed 'these brave men'.⁸⁷⁸

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Bradley did not witness Wild's persuasion. According to the biography, this episode was described by Wild himself in his report written after the escapees' court-martial in Singapore on 26 June 1944.⁸⁷⁹

However, there is another version of the episode regarding this incident.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid., p.94.

⁸⁷⁷ Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, pp.57-8.

⁸⁷⁸ Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, p.98.

⁸⁷⁹ Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, pp.57-8.

Ullmann, the other F Force interpreter, describes what happened in the camp after the escape party carried out their plan.⁸⁸⁰ Ullmann showed quite a different account about how the four escapees were saved. According to Ullmann, it was Commander Harris who persuaded Banno not to execute them. At Sonkrai No.2, Banno accused the POW officers who had joined the escape party of abandoning their men. Then, Harris, who had arrived there, said to Banno that:

No, Colonel Banno, they did it to let the world know how the Japanese treat their prisoners on the Thai Railway. We were told to trust the Imperial Japanese Army. When we left Singapore with our sick men, we were assured no harm would come to us. Three months later, out of the seven thousand who trusted the I.J.A, seventeen hundred are dead.⁸⁸¹

Listening to Harris' words, as Ullmann puts it, "Colonel Banno started to weep."⁸⁸² Moreover, Ullmann points out that Harris' letter to Banno might have saved the escapees' lives. The letter was sent just after the escapees were arrested in Burma. Ullmann regarded Harris' trick of representing the British Government as the key to success in persuading Banno. The letter reads as follows:

Sir, I have the honour to inform you that yesterday I was told by Lieut. Yamada that some British officers had been arrested for escape, that they would probably be condemned to death, and that I must hold myself in readiness to witness the execution.

If this is so, as a senior British officer and therefore the Representative of the British Government on the spot, I wish to make a formal appeal to the Imperial Japanese Government (on behalf of the British Government) not to exact the death penalty.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸⁰ See Stewart, pp.107-122.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., p.111.

⁸⁸² Ibid., p.112.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 113.

The letter is preserved in the report 'The History of F Force' as an appendix. The letter continues as follows:

While I have no information as to the reasons that impelled these officers to escape, the basis of this appeal is:-

(a) It is contrary to the Laws and Usages of War to exact the death penalty from prisoners of war who escape, nor is capital punishment imposed by other Great Powers.

(b) There is a feeling of despair among some officers at their continued inability to mitigate the severe and unprecedented hardships of the men of who they have been put in command by the Imperial Japanese Army. These hardships have already caused in the space of three months the deaths of over 600 men and sickness of 90% out of this force of 7,000 men. I have no doubt that this feeling of responsibility weighed heavily on the minds of these officers.

In the meantime, I urge that immediate action be taken to postpone execution until such time as a reply to this appeal is received.⁸⁸⁴

This letter was dated 19 July 1943, which corresponds to what Ullmann states in his memoirs. Here arises a question whether Wild knew about this letter written by Harris, his senior officer. Notably, in the Tokyo Tribunal, Wild testified about this incident but did not mention Harris' appeal to the Japanese. Wild testified as follows:

Eight British officers escaped from Sonkurai Camp in June 1943. They had agreed to risk their lives in order to tell the outside world of the treatment we were getting. They were captured after fifty-two days in the jungle during which four of them died. They were brought back to Sonkurai Camp, and I was told to see them, to go to see them shot. I protested about that, and they were sent to Singapore where they were sentenced to ten and nine years penal

⁸⁸⁴ TNA PRO WO325/16, Harris' letter to Banno, in 'Burma-Siam Railway 'F' Force: Account of Events and War Crimes against POWs Working On Railway'.

servitude.⁸⁸⁵

However, Wild's testimony in Tokyo missed out some facts indicated in his report on the trial of the four escapees held by the Japanese military authorities. In the report, Wild states that:

These four officers escaped from F Force in Thailand in July 1943. I was warned by Col Banno's headquarters to hold myself in readiness to go to Nieke Camp and see them shot on their recapture. With permission of Lt-Col S.W. Harris, OBE, RA, Senior British Officer of F Force, I saw Col Banno, who said that these officers had deserted their men in trouble. I replied that, on the contrary, the Japanese having made it impossible for them to look after their men, and being themselves unwilling to see them die by hundreds, they had been prepared to risk their own lives in an attempt to escape to India and let the British Army and the outside world know how the Japanese treated their prisoners on the Thailand railway. I also told Col Banno that when we left Singapore we were told to trust in the Imperial Japanese Army and no harm would come to us. Three months later, 1,700 of those who had trusted in the Imperial Japanese Army were dead and hundreds more were dying. At this Lt-Col Banno rather surprisingly started to weep.⁸⁸⁶

Since there is no further evidence and witnesses regarding this incident, neither Wild's account nor Ullmann's can be ruled out. Nevertheless, judging from the situation, it seems more likely that the senior officers of the two sides, Banno and Harris, talked about the issue at Nieke, where their headquarters were stationed, and the four escapees were transferred to. Thus, the initiative by Wild, who was an officer at Sonkrai No.2, seems a little unrealistic, although there is still a possibility that Wild acted as an interpreter between the two commanders. Nevertheless, Wild did not mention that he was an interpreter in the incident. This is a point that makes his evaluation difficult: it is often unclear whether he

⁸⁸⁵ JACAR, Ref.A08071314600, op. cit., p.5,490.

⁸⁸⁶ Wild quoted in Bradley, *Cyril Wild*, p.58.

was interpreting for his senior officer or acting on his own judgement. Consequently, the image of his role and ability could be inflated and, at the same time, obscured.

Hearsay and knowledge

One of the main features of Wild's account of the railway is the breadth of his knowledge. In fact, Wild displayed his knowledge of other camps or Forces that he had never stayed in or belonged to. The trial of Major Mizutani shows how Wild broadened his 'knowledge' of other camps and Forces without experiencing their actual conditions.

From 20 May until 6 June 1946, Major Totaro Mizutani, the former commandant of the No.5 Camp in Burma under the command of the Thai POW Camp, was tried by the British Military Court on three charges. The first charge was as follows:

Committing a war crime in that he between 18 January 1943 and 14 November 1943, in Burma, in violation of the laws and usages of war when engaged in the administration of British, American, Australian and Dutch Prisoners of War employed in the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway, was concerned in the inhumane treatment of the said Prisoners of War resulting in the deaths of hundreds of the said Prisoners of War and physical suffering by many others of the said Prisoners of War.⁸⁸⁷

The second charge was about the ill-treatment of a Burmese labourer, and the third charge was for a shooting of a British POW. These individual criminal cases were not concerned with the railway construction. Thus, they will not be discussed in this section.

In this trial, Wild testified as the second witness for the prosecution, providing evidence for the first charge, although the charge reads that the war crime was committed in Burma. It was 'A' Force that was sent to Burma from Singapore. Wild, an F Force officer, was never stationed in Burma. Here arises a question as

⁸⁸⁷ TNA PRO WO235/911, Charge sheet of Mizutani's trial, p.3.

to why the prosecutor called Wild as the witness. It was probably because the British military court took this case from the Australian or the Dutch court for the reason that a British POW was shot by the accused on 31 December 1944. This can be inferred from the fact that in the trial, the British prosecutor could not obtain affidavits, statements or witnesses from the Australians, the main members of A Force.⁸⁸⁸ In other words, the prosecution needed to make up the deficiency of the evidence by calling someone as a witness who was familiar with A Force's conditions.

The prosecutor's logic is that Wild knew the conditions of terrain and climate in Burma since he was stationed near the Thai-Burma border and that there was a similarity between conditions on the Burmese side and those on the Thai side. Thus, the prosecutor questioned Wild to this effect. Wild answered that he knew the Burmese side's conditions because lorry drivers in his group frequently drove up the road as far as Moulmein and reported back to the HQ; also because all the survivors at the Tambaya Hospital Camp in Burma later rejoined his group. Moreover, the liaison officers of the HQ often visited Tambaya. Thus, Wild testified that "I know from the reports which I had received that conditions in camps north of the border were approximately identical with those in the area where we were."⁸⁸⁹

At first, the prosecutor cautiously asked Wild about the similarity between the camps in Burma and those in Thailand within the limit of terrain and climate conditions. Nevertheless, when the prosecutor questioned Wild whether he encountered any tropical disease, Wild testified that in particular, he saw tropical ulcer in F Force as he suffered from the disease.⁸⁹⁰ Then, regarding tropical ulcer, Wild testified that "In a great number of cases of death after great suffering; in many cases amputation."⁸⁹¹ Nevertheless, Wild was not a medical professional.

⁸⁸⁸ See TNA PRO WO235/911, Prosecution's evidence, pp.22-5. Most affidavits were submitted by American ex-POWs, and some were by Dutch.

⁸⁸⁹ TNA PRO WO235/911, Wild's testimony, p.15.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., pp.15-16.

Indeed, F Force was in the severest conditions, where tropical diseases were necessarily on the rampage combined with malnutrition. A tropical ulcer was a typical deficiency disease in the camps. Moreover, the forced march over 300 km caused many scratches and scars on F Force men, which eventually developed into tropical ulcers, combined with nutritional deficiency. In short, F Force was more vulnerable to tropical ulcer than any other Force.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, F Force men often recollect that the Australian and Dutch POWs from the Burmese side were much fitter than F Force men. It was because supplies to A Force were relatively stable. Accordingly, POWs' health conditions should be differentiated between A Force and F Force. However, the prosecutor's logic in the trial made this distinction ambiguous.

Furthermore, in the closing address, the prosecutor referred to Lieut. Wakabayashi, whom Wild in his testimony described as a humane Japanese officer in F Force. The prosecutor argued that:

You have before you the example of Lieut. Wakabayashi. He did it, and if a lieutenant in command of a camp could have done it, do you not think that a captain in charge of a group could have done it? [...] For if Lieut. Wakabayashi had been a Major Mizutani, perhaps that witness would never have been before you at all.⁸⁹²

However, it was the trial of Mizutani, a commandant of an A Force camp, which was put under a situation quite different from F Force. A simple comparison cannot be made. Nevertheless, through shaping the court evidence, Wild influenced the trial and thus the account of what happened in Burma, where he had never stayed, based on his F Force knowledge and experiences in Thailand.

In the Tokyo Tribunal, the prosecutor and Wild used the same logic as in Mizutani's trial. The prosecutor questioned Wild whether he had had any contact with A Force or any report from them. Wild answered that A Force men had passed through Sonkrai to lay the railway lines in late September 1943 and that he had talked with Brigadier Varley, Lt. Colonel Anderson, and Captain Drower, an

⁸⁹² TNA PRO WO235/911, Prosecution's closing address, p.383.

interpreter of A Force. Then, the prosecutor asked Wild whether their account of what had happened to A Force differed materially from Wild's F Force account. Wild answered that:

Their experience had been very similar to that of my party, except that their food had been better and that they had not had to do a long march. As regards living and working conditions and treatment, I should say identical.⁸⁹³

Wild's argument seems to ignore what made F Force's plight distinctive from other Forces'. It was the scarcity of food and medical supplies, the long march over 300 km, and the rampage of diseases. These factor impacted their living and working conditions substantially. In the cross-examination of Wild, the defence counsel questioned about Wild's covering of different camps' working conditions. Wild answered that:

As regards H Force, I lived with H Force in Siam for three weeks at Kanburi. I lived with the officers and men of H Force in Singapore for the rest of the war. Also, as regards a considerable number of those camps you mentioned, I saw them for permittedly short periods both on my way up to the Three Pagodas Pass and again on my way down. As regards those working in Burma, A Force, I mentioned that I shared a camp with them in September 1943 for some time.⁸⁹⁴

In short, what Wild meant was that although he had been stationed in the limited camps of F Force, such as Nieke and Sonkrai, he knew well the conditions of other Forces' camps since he shared information with officers and men from such Forces. However, such information, not first-hand, tends to convey hearsay and rumours in those camps. Thus, Wild's 'authoritative' account needs to be examined thoroughly to exclude uncertain narratives.

⁸⁹³ JACAR, Ref.A08071314400, op. cit., Wild's testimony, p.5,437.

⁸⁹⁴ JACAR, Ref.A08071314600, op. cit., Wild's testimony. p.5,776.

F Force Factor and Wild

Wild's account played a crucial role in forming the 'F Force' factor, which has influenced the image of the Burma-Thailand Railway in public, the press and academia. This section deals with how the 'F Force' factor was formed in public after the war.

On 12 September 1945, Padre J. N. Duckworth, who had stayed at the Sonkrai No.2 Camp with 1,680 F Force men, made a broadcast to London entitled "Japanese Holiday", which was later printed on board M.S. *Sobieski* in the Mediterranean Sea on 18 October 1945.⁸⁹⁵ Broadcast to London only a month after the Japanese surrender, his speech seems to have had a considerable influence on the British public opinion about the railway. Moreover, the printed version's distribution to the returning POWs could influence their writings, such as affidavits, statements or memoirs. In short, the printed version could be one of the reference materials for the ex-POWs to fill in where their memories were obscure.

On 18 September 1945, *The Times* published a report entitled "A Railway of Death I – How The Burma-Siam Line Was Made: Prisoners' Sufferings in the Jungle."⁸⁹⁶ The lead section, in which a brief description of the railway was made, was followed by the section of "'F" Force'. The rest of the article was about F Force's hardship. It seems that it was written based on Wild's report because the article and the report had similar expressions in places. On the next day, "A Railway of Death II – Japanese Inhumanity in Siam: Crimes Against Allied Prisoners of War" followed.⁸⁹⁷ The article was mainly about F Force's plight, although it mentioned H Force in a paragraph. Notably, these two articles were the first publication of the atrocities on the railway. Thus, it can be said that the public story of the Burma-Thailand Railway began with F Force with an element

⁸⁹⁵ J.N. Duckworth "Japanese Holiday: A Broadcast to London" extracted in Bradley, *Towards the Setting Sun*, pp.60-63.

⁸⁹⁶ 'A Railway Of Death: How The Burma-Siam Line Was Made: Prisoners' Sufferings in the Jungle', *The Times* (London, 18 September 1945), p.5.

⁸⁹⁷ 'A Railway Of Death: Japanese Inhumanity in Siam: Crimes Against Allied Prisoners of War', *The Times* (London, 19 September 1945), p.5.

of sensationalism in the press.

On 10 March 1947, *The Times* published an article titled 'Tokyo War Guilt Trial: Japanese Expansionist Aims Disclosed', reporting how the Japanese had planned aggression. The report ends with the words as follows:

The horrors of the rape of Nanking, the secret pacts with Germany, the exploitation of the Netherlands East Indies, the encouragement of traffic in narcotics, the ruthless consumption of the lives of allied prisoners of war, was related in the sober testimony of the late Colonel C.H.D. Wild, on the Burma-Siam railway – all these things, long concealed by a rigorous censorship, the Tribunals has at last made known to the people of Japan.⁸⁹⁸

As mentioned above, Wild's testimony about the railway at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal in September 1946 made him a prominent figure circulating the F Force narrative as if he represented all the POWs on the railway.

On 27 July 1995, fifty years after the war, a TV programme entitled *The Big Story (Tokyo Encounter)* was aired in Britain, in which two ex-POWs on the railway visited Japan and met former Japanese Railway Corps officers, expecting their apologies. The POWs were Douglas Weir and James Bradley, and the former Japanese officers were Juji Tarumoto and Hiroshi Abe. Weir met with Tarumoto and Bradley with Abe. Notably, Bradley was a comrade of Wild and the author of Wild's biography. According to *The Times'* report on 27 July 1995, Abe broke down in tears and admitted his guilt when he met Bradley and said that "I can never forget the suffering of your men when you had to burn and bury your dead. I must take a large part of the blame for what happened."⁸⁹⁹ In contrast, when Weir confronted Tarumoto with the affidavits of his trial, Tarumoto said that he could not remember the allegations in the affidavits.⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁸ 'Tokyo War Guilt Trial - Japanese Expansionist Aims Disclosed', *The Times* (London, 10 March 1947), p.5.

⁸⁹⁹ John Young, 'Kwai Camp Chief Apologises to British PoWs', *The Times* (London, 27 July 1995), p.9.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

What is essential here is to consider the different situations of the two Japanese officers. Abe and Bradley were in Sonkrai No.2, where the conditions were the worst along the railway. On the other hand, Tarumoto and Weir were in relatively lenient camps in Thailand. However, in reality, little is known about the difference between F Force and other groups. Thus, the public would regard F Force's extreme hardship as a general state on the railway and accordingly expect Tarumoto to express the same 'remorse' as Abe. Since F Force's particularity now sets the standard for the general view on the railway, the 'F Force factor' should be a key to ascertain how the POWs and the media built the narratives of the railway.

Conclusion

Wild was undoubtedly one of the most influential figures who formed the British official account of the Burma-Thailand Railway. During the captivity in Thailand, Wild was a senior interpreter of F Force. After the war, he was in charge of the war crimes investigation team in Singapore and Malaya and produced evidence for the war crimes trials. Notably, Wild interrogated Japanese war criminal suspects and translated their statements into English. Thus, he was in a position to be able to affect the evidence.

Moreover, in Banno and six others' trial, the prosecution's opening address was a duplicate of Wild's report. Besides, in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, he testified before the court, and the testimony was reported worldwide by the British press. Consequently, Wild's account gained the 'authoritative' status regarding the railway.

However, this chapter examined his evidence and found problems in it. The discrepancies between the evidence Wild presented and the testimonies Aoki and Tanio gave in their trials raised a suspicion that his evidence was a concoction. Moreover, Wild's testimonies in Mizutani's trial and the Tokyo Tribunal imply that Wild tried to make his knowledge and experience seem more 'authoritative' than they were. As a result, even though his experience was limited to the F Force camps, Wild stated that he was familiar with A Force and H Force owing to information and reports he gathered. However, such evidence could contain

hearsay and rumours as the sources are not examined.

Therefore, the process in which Wild's 'authoritative' account was formed seems to contain some dubious elements. Furthermore, as Wild's 'authoritative' account became the basis of the 'F Force factor' in constructing the railway narrative, the existing account affected by the 'F Force factor' may need examination and review.

Too much commitment by the F Force 'victim' in the trials could bring about bias in the official account and the public image of the railway, while various other groups and peoples had different experiences on the railway.

Conclusion

The Burma-Thailand Railway has been the symbol of the POWs' suffering inflicted by the brutality of the Japanese. The suffering and the brutality indeed existed on the railway, whereas the POWs and the Japanese had different perceptions about what happened. This thesis has explored how the POWs and the IJA servicemen shaped their episodes and how different perceptions were created between the various groups on the railway.

Japanese rationality vs Western rationality

In the introduction of this thesis, a question was raised about why the IJA servicemen could not behave as the POWs saw as rational. This research has offered an answer. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the POWs and the Japanese had different values and thus conflicting views on life and death. The POWs respected international law and humanitarianism, whereas the Japanese adored Bushido. Accordingly, something outside Westerners' experience based on modern European values happened on the railway. The POWs regarded it as irrational or even immoral. Nevertheless, it is also true that the POWs and the Japanese knew little about each other. Presumably, their ignorance of the enemies led to misunderstandings and fears of what they could not understand, and the sense of fear and resentment amplified the enemy's 'brutal' image. As was dealt in Chapter 2, Tarumoto's notoriousness exemplifies the POWs' shaping of the 'brutality'.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kinvig, the Director of Army Education, sought an explanation of the Japanese brutality in the IJA's institution and culture and ascertained the importance of willpower. Kinvig explains that the IJA's training system "made a fetish of self-discipline and the cultivation of willpower and institutionalised the popular belief that sufficient willpower can overcome any obstacle if one tries hard enough."⁹⁰¹ His insight corresponds to General

⁹⁰¹ Kinvig. *River Kwai Railway*, p.10.

Masakazu Kawabe's explanation about the IJA's willpower education.⁹⁰² Kawabe, a long-time staff officer at the Office of Inspectorate General of Military Training, stressed in his book the importance of spiritual education in the IJA. Kawabe explains that the primary principle for strengthening the IJA was to combine the Western progressive military technologies with the willpower of Bushido.⁹⁰³ This hybrid could be a factor in the IJA's 'irrationality' perceived by the POWs and Western scholars.

However, it is also true that the IJA needed some ambiguity in its POW policy because of the Japanese practice to die before captured. It made the rigid application of the Geneva Convention incompatible with the Japanese value based on Bushido, according to which, surrender was shameful and should be avoided. Nevertheless, Bushido also encourages compassion for surrendering enemies. Thus, while having signed the convention for the ideal of protecting those who surrendered, Japan could not ratify it because it was almost impossible to educate their soldiers not to surrender on the one hand but protect enemy POWs on the other. This ambiguity could be a source of misunderstanding and indeed affected the POWs' fate on the railway.

IJA's elites and their historiography

Furthermore, Chapter 1 dealt with the IJAs' elite rivalry between the GSO and the MOW, which made the IJA indecisive and its decision-making process opaque. Notably, the rivalry influenced the relationship between the Railway Corps and the POW Camp Administration Unit on the railway. The Railway Corps was under the command of the GSO, whereas the POW Camp Administration Unit belonged to the MOW in principle. However, outside Japan, the Thai POW Camp Administration was under the Southern Army's direct command, which was under the control of the GSO. This inefficient and complicated chain of command affected the efficiency and efficacy of the policies on the railway and the POWs. Notably, the POWs could hardly understand the IJA's complicated decision-making process.

⁹⁰² See Kawabe, *Nihon Rikugun Seishin Kyōikushi Kō*. Vol.1.

⁹⁰³ Kawabe, Vol.1, p.14

Notably, after the war, the elites of the GSO and the MOW wrote the IJA's official history and engaged in the historiography, based on war diaries, reports and memoirs written by their former superiors and colleagues. Accordingly, the elites' historiography is likely to be influenced and biased by their experiences and perspectives. While familiar with the internal affairs inside the IHQ and the Government in Tokyo, the elites did not witness what happened on the railway. Thus, Hiroike's memoirs, often discording with the official history, is of use to examine the elites' account. Presumably, Hiroike's scathing criticism of the elites in Tokyo was not welcomed by the official historiographers. Indeed, Hiroike's account was not reflected in the official history.

The official history often refers to a document entitled 'Railway Military Operation Record'⁹⁰⁴ produced by the Repatriation Bureau's War History Section and authored by Lt. Colonel Shigeru Kubota, a former staff officer of the GSO's Railway Section. Also, Asai saw a report entitled 'The Summary of the Construction Progress of the Burma-Thailand Railway' in the Justice Ministry's Investigation Department, which Asai regarded as Kubota's report.⁹⁰⁵ Besides, the report 'POW use situation in line with Thai-Burmese railway construction investigation report from June, 1942 to October, 1943', an essential document in the official history, was compiled by the MOW elites. This report is now preserved in the Military Archives, NIDS, with a note that:

This report was conserved by Lt. Colonel Hayashi, a staff officer of the MOW's Military Affairs Bureau. Presumably, the report was compiled in the MOW as an explanatory document regarding the POWs' employment in the Burma-Thailand Railway construction. It summarises and reflects the reality of the POWs' conditions at that time, which is worthwhile as reference material.⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰⁴ JACAR, Ref.C14020320200; C14020323000, 'Railway Military Operation Record(NIDS)'.

⁹⁰⁵ Asai, 'Taimen Tetsudo Hoi', p.1

⁹⁰⁶ 'POW Use Situation in Line with Thai-Burmese Railway Construction Investigation Report from June, 1942 to October, 1943', Military Archives,

The Japanese official account based on these reports authored by the elites in Tokyo does not necessarily reflect the reality on the railway as Hiroike's different account indicates. Therefore, the memoirs of former IJA servicemen who worked on the railway are worth reading.

Allied sources

Nevertheless, Western scholars have had accessibility issues to Japanese sources and even regarded them as unreliable. Thus, Western scholarly works have mainly depended on ex-POWs' writings and official reports. However, such sources from the Allied side are not free from credibility problems. For instance, Kratoska points out that the figure of Asian labourers' deaths was inflated to 250,000 in five decades after the war.⁹⁰⁷ Presumably, this inflation is attributed to the fact that the Allied documents and reports have not been examined academically. Chapter 3 ascertained how the labourers' figures were inflated, suggesting that every source's credibility should be thoroughly examined as various groups on the railway had different objectives and motivations. Also, Chapter 3 explored how accurate the Japanese records were, although they are regarded as unreliable by Western scholars. Notably, *inzu-shugi*, or the counting-numbers principle, made the Japanese records fairly accurate as it functioned as a motivation.

Besides, in Western academia, research on the IJA's decision-making process regarding the railway project and the POWs' treatment has been insufficient even though the IJA's decision affected the POWs' life in captivity. For instance, in the prevailing account, it is believed that the Japanese Government and the military authorities had no intention to obey the 1929 Geneva Convention to protect POWs. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the Japanese intended to follow the convention as long as it did not conflict with their interest. What is noteworthy is that this attitude created vagueness in the Japanese POW policy as there was no clear-cut, single standard to treat POWs. Accordingly, the POWs could not understand the IJA's real intention, in which the military advantage, the

NIDS, Nansei-Thai-Indochina-75.

⁹⁰⁷ Kratoska, 'General Introduction', p11.

traditional value and the respect for the international law were entangled. Consequently, the POWs could not trust their captors. Thus, based on the POWs' stereotype episodes, Western academic works have been unable to grasp the complete picture of the railway.

Officer POWs

In recognising the perception gap between the captive and the captor, Tarumoto's book is of importance. The memoirs of the former engineer platoon commandant can offer a different angle to the POWs' account and thus an alternative interpretation of what happened. At Tarumoto's trial, many affidavits and reports regarding his brutality were submitted to the court by ex-POWs, mostly officers, who consolidated his image as a cruel commandant. Chapter 2 explored how the British officer POWs formed their account and how influential it became. Also, by comparing the POWs' court evidence with Tarumoto's memoirs, the chapter analysed how the difference in perception was formed between the POWs and the Japanese. Notably, what was omitted from the POWs' evidence offers a clue to fill in the perception gap: a cultural difference was lying behind prejudice and ignorance between the captive and the captor. Tarumoto's case revealed in particular how differently the British and the Japanese understood superiors' orders, officers' status, and the meaning of captivity.

Indeed, Tarumoto was sentenced to life imprisonment, but the court could not sentence him to death despite his 'brutality' described in the ex-POWs' evidence. The advisory officer to the war crimes trials' confirming officer clearly expressed his dissatisfaction with the sentence in his report. The dissatisfaction indicates how notorious Tarumoto was among the POWs. Notably, his notoriousness was recalled fifty years after the war by the mass media citing the advisory officer's dissatisfaction. In short, Tarumoto's 'brutal' image has been kept in the prevailing account of the railway, and little is known about the fact that the court corrected Tarumoto's original charge and excluded the words 'deaths of POWs' from his charge.

Besides, while based on ex-POWs' court evidence, the British authorities' account could differ from the POWs' unofficial narratives told in their memoirs or

letters. For instance, Adams states in his memoirs that even Tarumoto had a humane face when they talked directly. Thus, it is crucial to reveal the submerged views of ex-POWs and compare them with the prevailing official account that could be influenced by stereotype.

As explained in Chapter 2, the primary reason for Tarumoto's cruel image was that the officer POWs were forced to work under his command and began to have animosity against him. Presumably, the animosity was amplified by Tarumoto's violation of the officers' privilege by forcing them to work on the railway. Indeed, international law forbade the captor from forcing the officer POWs to do manual labour. The officers' privilege was also mentioned in the Dillon report on F Force co-authored by Wild, which was dealt with in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, the reality on the railway was much more complicated than the simple fact that the Japanese violated the officers' right. In fact, not only the Japanese but also other ranks POWs harboured resentment towards their officers being idle but receiving officers' allowance from the captor. Thus, in memoirs and testimonies of other ranks, the officers were often criticised for doing nothing. However, the officers only emphasised the illegality of the Japanese forcing them to work in their reports, omitting the criticism on themselves. Thus, the other ranks can offer a different angle to the POWs' real life on the railway, which can hardly be seen in the official reports made by the officers for the army authorities.

Notably, Tarumoto's memoirs revealed a fact that was not told in the official reports or the court evidence: in fact, the Japanese negotiated with the representatives of the officer POWs regarding the officers' labour, and the POW command agreed to it. This fact was intentionally or unintentionally omitted from their reports and thus the British official account. Thus, in the meeting of Weir and Tarumoto fifty years after the war, which attracted the media attention in the heat of the 50th anniversary of the victory against Japan, Weir and the British media could not understand or accept what Tarumoto said to him as they did not know any view from different angles,

Adams' straightforwardness

While the officers' official reports and their account tend to exclude other ranks'

different perspectives, the memoirs and narrations expressed by other ranks or subalterns are quite straightforward. In their 'unofficial' accounts, other ranks not only criticised their officers for being idle and uncooperative but also blamed their comrades. For instance, stealing was indeed prevalent among the POWs. These dishonourable deeds of the POWs have been overlooked in the official account formed by their senior officers. Thus, the straightforwardness of other ranks or subalterns could offer a different perspective.

Surprisingly, such straightforwardness appeared in dialogues between the old enemies. Fourteen years before the meeting of Wier and Tarumoto, some ex-POWs and former IJA engineers got together to exchange their views. On 23 April 1981, two ex-POWs, Adams and Janis, visited Japan to meet former railway engineers, Futamatsu and Sugano. The four met in front of the locomotive C5631, brought back from Thailand to Japan by *Tetsurinkai*, the veteran group of the former railway engineers, placed in the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. The meeting notes are now preserved in the archives in the Kaiko Bunko Library of the shrine. In the talk, the ex-POWs frankly expressed themselves on what they thought of the railway project, which cannot be seen in the official account or even memoirs published.

According to Adams, at the time of the war, the POWs generally thought that the Japanese were an uncivilised race who behaved rudely, and indeed everything was beyond the POWs' understanding. Besides, facing the terrible conditions emerging one after another, the POWs could not help but bear a grudge against the Japanese, which was the only policy left for survival. After almost forty years, however, Adams told the former engineers that he now cool-headedly understood the environment where the Japanese were put, their different ideas about the proper treatment of POWs, and difficulties in maintaining an adequate food supply. Adams stated that the Japanese misconduct was not conducted for the purpose of abusing the POWs.⁹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Adams also admitted that it was true that there had been a Japanese commandant whom he wanted to kill.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁸ Tsukamoto, 'British Ex-POWs Mr G.P. Adamas and Mr M. Janis' Visit to Japan', op. cit., p.1.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.2.

According to Janis, the POWs gradually became able to recognise the difference between the Railway Corps and the POW Camp Administration Unit. The difference was reflected in their beatings of the POWs. Moreover, the POWs had a grudge against the Railway Corps Command for its negligence and incompetence rather than the engineer soldiers and low-ranking officers working on the railway under the same conditions as the POWs. At that time, the existence of the Southern Army and the IHQ above the Railway Corps could not be seen by the POWs.⁹¹⁰ Furthermore, Adams and Janis stated that, in the beginning, the POWs resisted and sabotaged the construction, but at a certain point in time, they began to think that participating actively in the construction was the only way to go home.⁹¹¹

These views differ from those recorded in official reports for the British army authorities. Although Adams was a lieutenant, his former civilian occupation as a butcher might have made him flexible and straightforward. Interestingly, Adams, appointed as a cattle driver by the Japanese, could witness various aspects of the captor and described them in his memoirs. Chapter 4 dealt with the food supply issue and the difference in food culture between the captive and the captor.

Captain Wakamatsu

Private correspondence also tells episodes that were not told in the courtroom, indicating the limitations of the official account based on reports and court evidence. For instance, Captain Wakamatsu's execution exemplifies such a limitation. In 1979, Major Leslie J. Robertson, a former A Force group commandant, wrote to Futamatsu and inquired after Wakamatsu. In his letter dated 6 December 1979, Robertson states as follows:

As commander of the Australians I met Lieut. Seizo Wakamatsu, our camp commandant. I think he was an honourable man who did not like to see the sufferings of our soldiers; but he had to obey his orders. [...] I would like to discover what happened to Lt. Wakamatsu after the war. I shall be grateful if

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., p.2.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., p.3.

you can advise me how I may find this information.[...] I learned that Lt (later Capt) Wakamatsu had been sentenced to life imprisonment by the War Crimes Tribunal; but I do hope that this has since been adjusted.⁹¹²

However, Futamatsu did not know how to answer, knowing that Wakamatsu had been executed in 1947. Thus, Futamatsu could not but reply that he had no information about Wakamatsu. In 1980, Robertson sent back a letter dated 22 April, saying that he was sorry to hear that, and described Wakamatsu as follows:

He was, I believe, a gentleman who disliked the terrible task of forcing sick men to work on the Railway construction during the worst of the wet monsoon. I know him to be a very brave officer: our ship "Moji Maru" was bombed and nearly sunk by the USAAF as we came near Moulmein in January 1943. Wakamatsu rushed up to the stern of the ship where the ammunition was on fire and the shells were exploding. Assisted by some Australian POWs he pushed the boxes overboard at great risk to his life. [...] I feel that Wakamatsu did what he could for us. The War Crimes Tribunals after the war condemned him to death but this was commuted to life imprisonment. I understand that he has been freed many years now. I hope that he is now in good health.⁹¹³

However, between April 1980 and August 1982, Robertson found that Wakamatsu was dead. According to Yoshio Chaen, Robertson sent Nagase a letter dated 26 August 1982 with a message to Wakamatsu's family.⁹¹⁴ Presumably, before this letter, Robertson inquired after Wakamatsu to Nagase, who is deemed to have told him Wakamatsu's execution at Changi. A Japanese record tells that the date of the

⁹¹² Robertson's letter dated 6 December 1979 in 'Futamatsu Collection', Kaiko Bunko Library, the Yasukuni Shrine, 84790.392.9T.

⁹¹³ Ibid., Robertson's letter dated 22 April 1980.

⁹¹⁴ Yoshio Chaen, *Nihon BC-Kyu Senpan Shiryo (Documents of Japanese BC-Class War Criminals)* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1983), p.233.

execution was on 30 April 1947.⁹¹⁵ In fact, on 21 February 1947, Robertson, the then Chief of Engineer Branch, requested the GHQ South East Asia Land Force to provide all the information concerning the fate of the Japanese who were on the staff of the No.5 POW camp, Burma. Robertson received a document dated 12 March 1947 that Wakamatsu's death sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment on 13 August 1946.⁹¹⁶

In his letter to Nagase, Robertson recollects that he was obliged to give written evidence of identification for Mizutani and Wakamatsu's trials, but that in the latter's case, Robertson commented that Wakamatsu had done what he could for the POWs and was only acting under orders.⁹¹⁷ Thus, when Robertson received the information of Wakamatsu's commutation, he thought his petition worked. However, Wakamatsu's death sentence was executed for some reason, which is still unknown. In the same letter, Robertson comments that: "Those war crimes tribunals, naturally, looked at these matters in the special heat of post-war excitement and summed everything up on hearsay."⁹¹⁸

In October 1987, Robertson wrote to Futamatsu again to congratulate the publication of Futamatsu's book. In this letter dated 19 October 1987, Robertson states that:

As engineers it was a difficult task for us; not technically but mentally. A fantastic engineering project; but one that, as enemies, we could not honourably take part in. However, that was a long time ago and now we respect one another for doing our duties. [...] Again, as an engineer, may I say how much I appreciated your book. The contents recalled those months of terrible battle, not against the enemy but against Nature. We all share in

⁹¹⁵ Sugamo Isho Hensan Kai(ed.) *Seiki No Isho (Farewell Notes of the Century)* (Tokyo: Sugamo Isho Hensan Kai, 1953), Furoku (Appendix), p.51.

⁹¹⁶ Document BM/AG/WCS/50558 GHQ SEALF 12 March 47 in Chaen p.233.

⁹¹⁷ Chaen, p.233.

⁹¹⁸ Robertson's letter to Nagase in Chaen, p.232.

this and we continue to remember with pride those who did not return to their homes!⁹¹⁹

Moreover, in the previous letter to Futamatsu dated 6 December 1979, Robertson also stated that:

As a soldier and engineer myself, and a Prisoner of War unlawfully used on such a military project, my duty clearly was NOT to help. I instructed my soldiers to do everything possible to sabotage your railway engineers' work by bad work and obstruction. As engineers, this was a sad but necessary wartime deceit. In normal circumstances this stupendous railway task would have fascinated our engineers.⁹²⁰

Robertson's letters imply that the findings of the war crimes trials and the official account do not necessarily reflect what the POWs thought to be true or appropriate. Notably, the correspondence between the ex-POW commandant and the former IJA engineer provided the old enemies with an opportunity to share what they really thought about the railway. This is undoubtedly an aspect of the railway's history that the court findings and the official account have missed for long. By taking such omitted views into account, this research aimed to integrate the different perspectives and reconstruct the railway's narrative.

Wild and F Force

As ascertained in Chapters 5,6, and 7, Wild was one of the most influential figures who shaped the railway's episode, and his account gained an 'authoritative' status. As an officer and senior interpreter, Wild witnessed F Force's plight in the up-country camps in Thailand. After the war, he became a leading war crime investigator and produced evidence for the trials in Singapore. Moreover, in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, Wild testified about the railway camps' situation as a prosecution witness. Thus, Wild's background made his account 'authoritative'.

⁹¹⁹ Robertson's letter dated 19 October 1987 in 'Futamatsu Collection'.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., Robertson's letter dated 6 December 1979.

Indeed, Wild's report on F Force was duplicated in the prosecution's opening address of the trial of Banno and six others without any change. As F Force was the most unfortunate POW group on the railway with more than 3,000 deaths out of 7,000, Wild could extend his influence by spreading F Force's episodes. Consequently, F Force's tragedy was placed at the centre of the railway's history despite its particularity. Accordingly, views of other POW Forces could be marginalised, while 60,000 POWs were on the railway in total with their environments and experiences varying by times and locations. This is what this research calls the 'F Force factor'.

This 'F Force factor' has been quite effective in building POWs' image in the mass media. After Wild's death, Bradley, an F Force officer, succeeded Wild's role and consolidated POWs' image based on the F Force experience. The mass media supported Bradley's efforts and succeeded in taking the footage of Abe, a former IJA engineer officer, apologising with tears to Bradley. Notably, the 'F Force factor' was amplified by the media's sensationalism. Atcherley, an F Force intelligence officer, states in his memoirs that "I have learned that feelings of hatred among those who have to do the fighting are displayed far more by those who have never been directly involved, led by the media."⁹²¹

Interestingly, the other F Force interpreter set up another perspective about what happened to the Force. In his memoirs, Ullmann, an NCO interpreter, provided a vivid and impartial observation of F Force officers, men and the Japanese. Ullmann's position and ability to communicate with all the groups made his view distinctive from others. Ullmann's recollection offers a different version of F Force's episode from Wild's. The two different views between the two interpreters were compared in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Medical explanations

Besides, Chapter 6 dealt with F Force from the viewpoint of medicine. F Force's POW medical officers produced medical reports, and their medical experiences are helpful in analysing what happened to the F Force men. In fact, the British combatant officers did not provide satisfactory explanations in their reports why

⁹²¹ Atcherley, Location No.257.

more British POWs died than Australians in the F Force camps. Chapter 6 found out some reasons for the gap between the British and the Australians. The medical reports and POWs' memoirs confirm that the Australians paid much more attention to sanitary conditions than the British. Ullmann states in his memoirs that Australian camps were clean and tidy. Notably, Hearder points out that the Australians took better sanitary measures because of the education in the AIF.

In his trial, Tanio, F Force's Japanese chief medical officer, testified that the POWs had always put their boots on the floor or beds in their huts to prevent them from being stolen, which made their huts filthy and caused the spread of diseases such as cholera. However, the officer POWs overlooked the thefts and their effects on the POWs' health conditions in their reports. Notably, the victims of the POWs' crimes and rackets were their comrades in the same camps.

The crimes and rackets were not limited to the F Force camps but in every camp along the railway, which implies the existence of black markets. Chapter 4 explored this problem from the viewpoint of food and health. The POWs would often buy supplementary food from local vendors because of their dislike of a rice diet and the general shortage of food rations. Having spent all their money, the POWs often sold their belongings, such as shirts, to local vendors to obtain extra foods. However, without proper wears, their health conditions indeed deteriorated. Moreover, having sold all the items they had, some POWs moved into theft and racket. The rise of such crimes and black markets consequently fomented the corruption and the spread of diseases in their camps. For instance, there was a racket to sell clothes of cholera victims to local labourers. Some POW NCOs were bribed to remove a briber's name from the list of their working party.

The IJA was entirely responsible for failing to provide the POWs with adequate food rations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the railway construction was prepared half-heartedly from the beginning. However, as described in Chapter 4, it is also true that the Japanese made efforts to deliver adequate food rations to the POWs. In the No.2 Camp, the IJA camp authorities and the POW command had regular meetings and talked about the food rations. In the meeting, the Japanese consented to increase the meat ration. Besides, in some camps, the Japanese provided POWs with cattle to improve the food rations. These efforts by the IJA

camp staff were omitted in the official account made by the officers.

Importantly, food exemplifies cultural differences between the POWs and the Japanese. The quantity and the quality of food for the Japanese differed significantly from those for Westerners, and the POWs had to adapt to the captor's rice diet, even though it was uncomfortable. In fact, rice caused digestive disorder in POWs' bodies, and its taste was disliked by many POWs, who did not know how to cook it properly. Moreover, some POWs avoided rice diets as the cause of beriberi. These problems of rice weakened the POWs' health conditions and, at the same time, made them crave food other than rice. As a result, there emerged black markets, which not only POWs, local vendors and labourers but also Korean guards joined. Therefore, the POWs' health problem resulted from a complex combination of various factors.

Labourers

While the local labourers were actively involved in the black markets and rackets, the POWs and the Allied authorities often saw them as 'slaves' who were forced to work by the IJA. Accordingly, the labourers' image as 'slave' is still influential in popular history and among scholars. However, as ascertained in chapter 3, the reality of the labourers is more complicated than it seems. Indeed, many labourers died in the railway construction, but it was largely because the Japanese took labourers' organisation and administration lightly. Unlike POWs, the labourers were recruited at a high salary on a voluntary basis and instead not protected legally and materially. In fact, their wages were often higher than those of the Japanese soldiers. Moreover, the recruiters were not the Japanese but local officials or civilian agents, which fomented desertions and rackets. In short, the IJA's control over the labourers was half-hearted. Thus, the labourers' hardships, rackets, desertions, and contractor status were all inextricably linked together. 'Slave' is too much a simplified image of the labourers.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the Burmese Ba Maw Government and the Thai Government acted differently towards the labourers' recruitment. Although interested in the railway project and worked cooperatively, the Thai Government did not directly recruit the workforce for the IJA. Instead, the Thais

mediated negotiations between the IJA and the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok. Thus, the Chinese labourers could have quite a good deal. Notably, a tiny number of Thai labourers worked under the IJA on the railway because Thais always deserted on receiving allowances in advance.

On the other hand, the Burmese Government actively cooperated with the IJA by organising labourers' corps, the 'sweat army'. Like an army organisation, the sweat army had the volunteers and the conscripted. Notably, Ba Maw admitted in his memoirs that there were crimes, rackets, and bribes conducted by the Burmese in the conscription process. Desertion and re-recruitment were often schemed by the Burmese officials and racketeers. As a result, the nominal figures of quotas on record were inflated. Here the Japanese practice of *inzu-shugi* allowed corruption to occur. Ba Maw observed that all the Japanese labour officers cared about was get the right number of labourers, not how it was done.⁹²² However, ex-POWs and scholars do not deal with these facts in their accounts of the labourers. Besides, Hla Pe, who cooperated with the British, had a different perspective from Ba Maw, who worked with the Japanese. Thus, the British colonial rule and the independence movement should be considered in analysing the Burmese narratives.

Mentality and Personality

Through the discussion in this thesis, it was found that personality was a crucial factor that affected the POWs' fate and thus their shaping of episodes. In other words, mentality, emotion, and compatibility could influence the perception of circumstances and hence episodes shaped through it.

The Japanese mentality was difficult for the POWs to comprehend because of their cultural difference and *vice versa*. Nevertheless, it is also true that both sides began to learn how to communicate with each other. For instance, Australian officers began learning the intricacies in interacting with their captor: J.G.G. White states, "I was to learn later that if you wanted to request something, it was always wiser to wait for the opportunity when you could speak alone, to the officer

⁹²² Ba Maw, p.295.

concerned.”⁹²³ Indeed, the Japanese tend to avoid complicated negotiations in public. In fact, in the railway camps, Japanese officers sometimes offered officer POWs alcohol or supper, intending to talk frankly in private. Some officer POWs accepted such an offer, but others did not because of a concern that such a session would label them as 'Jap Happy'. Notably, flexible officers succeeded in protecting their men by keeping trustful relationships with their captors. Indeed, Toosey, Knights and Harris had trustable counterparts in the IJA. Also, Pavillard, Ullmann and Adams could communicate well with the Japanese and understand their mentality. Accordingly, their memoirs are by no means full of a grudge but contain some friendly, humorous episodes with their enemy.

Nevertheless, as Adams stated at the meeting in Tokyo that grudge against the Japanese was the only means for survival on the railway, many POWs might well harbour such an emotion. Wild's behaviour can be explained in this context. His grudge continued after the war and materialised in the form of war crimes investigations and trials. The possibility that Wild concocted a suspect's statement or fabricated stories in his own statements was discussed in Chapter 7. Also, in Chapter 2, the British officers' pride was dealt with. Having been humiliated by a Japanese lieutenant in front of his subordinates, Lt. Colonel Swinton presumably harboured animosity against the Japanese and joined the war crimes investigation team after the war. Their pride was often implied in their reports to the military authorities.

Nevertheless, even officers' perspectives differed in individuals. In the No.2 Camp, Nobusawa, a Japanese medical officer, was notorious among the POWs. Hardie, a British medical officer, heavily criticised Nobusawa in his diary. Thus, Nobusawa and his subordinate NCO were sentenced to death after the war. However, Lieutenant Liang, another British medical officer, sent a letter to the Department of the Judge Advocate General, saying that the death penalty on the two Japanese was too severe. As a result, although Nobusawa's death sentence was not commuted, the NCO escaped death.⁹²⁴ This fact indicates that a different personality could have a different perception even in the same camp.

⁹²³ J.G.G. White's statement quoted in Hearder, pp.83-4.

⁹²⁴ TNA PRO WO235/957, Lieut. Liang's letter.

Furthermore, personal compatibility between a Japanese commandant and a POW commandant became crucial for life in the camp. For instance, in an F Force camp, Abe was on good terms with Lt Colonel Pope and Lt Colonel Ferguson but not with their successor, Hingston and thus frequently clashed with him. In the Tambaya Hospital Camp, Saito, the Japanese camp commandant, often clashed with Hunt, the POWs' medical chief. Without such clashes, the camp administration would have been more efficient. Thus, personal relationships are an essential piece to delineate the reality of the railway camps.

Moreover, what makes the matter more complicated is that the POWs' mentality varied by nationality. Header revealed that the Australians were more flexible and allowed their medical officers to lead activities in their camps. Consequently, Australian medical officers were above criticism and held the highest esteem for their devotion, whereas combatant officers could not obtain the same status as medical officers. Notably, Header points out that the medical officers worked in their 'civilian role' with great flexibility.⁹²⁵

Indeed, flexibility was a key to surviving the captivity. The successful POW commandants mentioned above had civilian backgrounds before joining the army. Their flexibility made it possible for the commandants to adopt the strategy of 'limited cooperation' with the Japanese to save their men. However, the career officers were often critical of such cooperation with the enemy. To be fair, it was a duty for the British servicemen to disturb the enemy's war effort once they became POWs. The failure of the duty would cause serious consequences afterwards. Thus, the career officers would not permit such cooperation with the enemy or could not admit it, if any.

However, the Japanese had an entirely different culture about how the captives should behave: the POWs were supposed to be obedient. Owing to the influence of Bushido, the Japanese thought that the POWs were saved by the captor's benevolence and thus should be obedient. Thus, it was not the sense of shame or contempt on the POWs but their defiant attitude that irritated the Japanese and made them brutal. However, such a peculiar Japanese notion was utterly alien to the POWs who knew that international law should protect their status as POWs.

⁹²⁵ Header, p.337.

In other words, the POWs despised the Japanese as uncivilised and unfamiliar with international law. What was worse, neither side knew that their enemy had different values. Accordingly, mutual dislike, distrust and even hatred were inevitable.

Besides, the British had race consciousness during the war. In June 1945, Brigadier T.F. Rodger reported to the army authorities that the British POWs recovered from the Far East showed fewer psychiatric symptoms and a more stable reaction to their captivity than POWs from Germany. Rodger, the then consultant psychiatrist to South East Asia Command, thought it was mainly due to the contempt that the British could feel for the Japanese and the lack of a feeling that 'the enemy was a man of a similar outlook and cultural background to themselves'.⁹²⁶

The trauma of the British

However, Rodger's view proved to be incorrect as it was later found that many FEPOWs were suffering from PTSD. Studies in the 1980s and 1990s established that their "PTSD was a 'persistent, normative and primary response' to the severe trauma of captivity."⁹²⁷ Jones and Wessely's research deals with the development of POWs' mental illness studies, according to which, at the time of WWI, POWs were thought to be protected from 'war neuroses' such as shell-shock behind the barbed wire. During WWII, British military psychiatrists changed the recognition of the 'protected' POWs and began to regard the POWs' mental illness as an adjustment disorder. Thus, after their release, the POWs were required to take a 're-education' programme rather than psychological treatment. It was not until the 1980s that the POWs' mental illness was regarded as a psychiatric disorder.⁹²⁸ Therefore, the FEPOWs had to wait for the recognition of their psychological injury for a long time with immense frustration.

⁹²⁶ Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21.2 (2010), 163–83., p.177.

⁹²⁷ Ibid., p.164.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

Jones and Wessely refer to Drs R. Bing and A.L. Vischer's observation of British POWs interned in Switzerland during WWI. Bing and Vischer found among the POWs a "form of neurasthenia characterised by mental exhaustion, irritability, intellectual instability, loss of concentration and disturbance of memory" and adopted the term 'barbed wire disease' for such a mental state. Interestingly, Vischer concluded that:

Brutal treatment does not produce the disease, neither does good treatment prevent it. Even a beautifully situated camp is not preventative...The disease is not cured by mere release from imprisonment.⁹²⁹

This observation indicates that the POWs with mental illness need psychiatric treatment and that any captivity could cause the disorder irrespective of the captor's attitude. At first, the British military authorities interpreted such abnormal mentality of recovered POWs as 'a sign of low morale'.⁹³⁰ By the end of 1944, the concept of an adjustment disorder was introduced to deal with their mental health problems, but in fact, a dissonance was created between the POWs and British society.

According to Jones and Wessely, the dissonance was accentuated by propaganda aimed at the POWs' families that the POWs were well looked after and were in some respect lucky to be out of the war. Accordingly, many repatriated POWs found that their family had little idea of the hardships they had endured during the captivity. In short, ex-POWs were left 'strangers in their own land', far from their ideal picture of home life drawn during their captivity. As Jones and Wessely put it, "Although this vision maintained morale in captivity, it served to heighten the contrast with reality when the POW returned to his family."⁹³¹ The British ex-POWs' frustration and disillusion with the reality continued until the 1980s. Thus, the ex-POWs might well direct their anger at their imprisonment, its harsh conditions, and the captor who inflicted the hardship on them. Also, it can

⁹²⁹ Ibid., p.167.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., p.170.

⁹³¹ Ibid., p.171-2.

be said that many ex-POWs might have produced their statements, affidavits, reports and memoirs under the condition of psychological injury from the captivity.

Interestingly, Jones and Wessely suggest that civilians essentially could have more resilience in mentality than soldiers as the latter were hardened by military training for hard-fighting.⁹³² This psychological feature of soldiers corresponds to career officers' inflexibility during the captivity, whereas officers with civilian experiences acted flexibly. Thus, the psychological injury worsened by soldiers' inflexibility could be a factor that affected the POWs' shaping of their episodes. Presumably, such episodes need some 'atrocious' elements. This subject needs further research from medical viewpoints.

Atrocity and collective memory

Besides individual POWs' state of mind, their collective memory should be an important subject. Notably, the POWs' collective memory sometimes contains a distortion of a fact. Header revealed a distortion in the Australian collective memory by introducing the experience of Roy Mills, an Australian medical officer, as follows:

It has been widely accepted that Australian POWs were beaten to death at Hellfire Pass, while building a particularly difficult and treacherous section of the Burma-Thai Railway. Mills contacted any men who had been there to ask them about it, and all said it was untrue, that this story had been started by someone and never challenged. Mills wrote to the Department of Veterans' Affairs detailing this misunderstanding, and gave names and addresses of the witnesses. He received no reply.⁹³³

Regarding how the distortion was created in the collective memory, Header points out the "pressure among ex-POWs not to challenge accepted versions of events or to examine too closely any of the prevalent and positive belief held by their families that obscure the truth of the indignity and horror of their

⁹³² Ibid., 182.

⁹³³ Header, p.41.

experience.”⁹³⁴ Until Hearder revealed it, the distortion had been overlooked even by scholars. Mill’s episode also indicates how little attention has been paid to examining the POWs’ collective memory, even if it might contain a distortion.

Some Australian scholars have researched how ex-POWs have formed their collective memory. Interestingly, the collective memory is closely related to the Anzac (Australian & New Zealand Army Corps) myth, the Australian nationalist narrative with the association of ‘Australian masculinity’, which was formed through the national experience of WWI.

Beaumont explains that the essential elements of the Anzac myth are a belief that: Australian soldiers were naturally good fighters because of the dominance of the rural values in pre-war Australia; for the democratic and relatively classless nature of Australian society, the soldiers were egalitarian, disrespectful of authority including military hierarchies introduced by the British; with their independent spirit, the soldiers show personal initiative in combat, resourcefulness in situations of hardship, and dry laconic humour even when under stress. Especially, their concept of ‘mates’, in other words, the loyalty to their fellow soldiers, is indispensable for their success on the battlefield. According to Beaumont, this stereotype of the Australian soldiers had been well established by WWII.⁹³⁵ Indeed, Australian ex-POWs wrote their memoirs on the lines of the Anzac myth.

Notably, F Force’s experience made it possible to compare the Australian POWs with the British and ascertain the Anzac myth’s relevance. In chapters 5 and 6, it was found that the Australian POWs were more flexible and loyal to their comrades and kept their mortality lower than the British.

However, the Australian POWs face a contradiction here: while the Anzac myth describes their soldiers as exemplary fighters, they were defeated and captured by the Japanese. Thus, the Japanese ‘brutality’ became an essential

⁹³⁴ Hearder, p.40.

⁹³⁵ Joan Beaumont, ‘Prisoners of War in Australian National Memory’, in B. Hatley-Broad and B. Moore(eds.) *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005), p.187.

element to maintain the Anzac myth. Beaumont comments that “it is intriguing to see how, from the experiences of a humiliating defeat in Malaya, Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies in early 1942, a heroic narrative emerged.”⁹³⁶ Beaumont explains that the Australian ex-POWs established their collective memory “of mateship on the part of Australians and brutality on the part of the Japanese.”⁹³⁷

Thus, the railway episodes were essential for the Australian POWs to make their captivity compatible with the Anzac myth. According to Beaumont, the notion that the POWs’ experiences in Japanese hands were not in any sense shameful was sustained by successful publications by the ex-POWs during the first decade after the war. These publications resulted in a ‘selective memory of captivity’ represented by the Changi Camp or the Burma-Thailand Railway, eclipsing other memories of captivity for three decades.⁹³⁸ Notably, once the railway episodes became dominant in the collective memory due to a significant number of their carriers, the ‘authorised’ memory’s carriers would emphatically deny dissonant memories of the captivity as they could challenge the dominant value of mateship.⁹³⁹

Beaumont’s point corresponds to Mills’ experience. The collective memory sustained by the Anzac myth and the Japanese ‘brutality’ as necessary elements implies the Australian version of the ‘atrocities’ effect in consolidating a narrative. The relation between collective memories and atrocities should merit further research.

From racial consciousness to pride

According to Twomey, in the formation process of the Australian collective memory, there were two phases: the former is linked to the distress of the humiliation, and the latter to the pride of the sacrifice. Regarding the first phase, Twomey points out that:

⁹³⁶ Ibid.,

⁹³⁷ Ibid., 188-9.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 188.

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 191.

Historians have long pointed to the ways in which defeat, capture by a non-white enemy, and the emaciated condition of many POWs upon liberation posed profound challenges to racial hierarchies, masculine identity, and national mythologies of war.⁹⁴⁰

Notably, the first formation of the collective memory during the 1940s and 1950s was based on the Australian racial consciousness damaged by the “surrender of the ‘sons of Anzac’ to an Asian enemy”, the ‘slave-like conditions to which they were subjected’ and ‘their physical and psychological emasculation’.⁹⁴¹ Thus, during this period, the Australian ex-POWs wrote their memoirs with a primary message that the Japanese, who were a fanatical enemy and an inherently untrustworthy and callous race, had persecuted the POWs partly because they were white.⁹⁴² Thus, the brutal and barbarous image of the Japanese was necessary.

At the same time, according to Twomey, the POWs were frustrated by the fact that the Australian Government refused to compensate them in the immediate post-war period because it might prove a premium to surrender and discourage soldiers from fighting. The same logic was applied to the memorialisation of dead POWs until the late 1980s.⁹⁴³

In the 1980-90s, the second phase of the collective memory-shaping occurred in Australia, which Beaumont and Witcomb call 'the new memory boom', and their trauma and victimhood were given the privilege in commemoration and remembrance.⁹⁴⁴ Twomey explains that since PTSD became recognised as a medical syndrome, the POWs' trauma gained attention from the 1980s onwards, influencing how the ex-POWs should interpret their experiences and how the

⁹⁴⁰ Christina Twomey, ‘POWs of the Japanese: Race and Trauma in Australia, 1970–2005’, *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 7.3 (2014), 191–205., p.192.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Ibid., p.195.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., p.192.

⁹⁴⁴ Beaumont and Witcomb, op. cit., p.72.

collective memory was to be formed.⁹⁴⁵ During this period, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's radio series, *POW: Australians Under Nippon*, produced by Hank Nelson and Tim Bowden, played a crucial role in disseminating the horror and the trauma of captivity in public, and their extensive oral history project gained immense popularity.⁹⁴⁶ Accordingly, both the POWs' interpretation that their captivity was a sacrifice for the nation and the public sympathy towards them have become the remedy of the trauma. This process made the Australian POWs' collective memory unique.

Notably, Beaumont and Witcomb suggest that the Australians' collective memory differs from that of the British, whose role in the Pacific War was relegated to a secondary place after the United States. Thus, when the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum was established in the mid-1990s, the British Government did not participate in the project in Thailand, whereas the Australian Government got involved in it actively.⁹⁴⁷ The gap in collective memories between the Australians and the British require future research, although this research provided a basis by comparing the British and the Australians in F Force.

The shaping of an episode

Although the ex-POWs' state of mind could provide a clue about how they shaped their episode of the war, their mentality is far more complicated than it seems. Moore suggests how to analyse the memory writings of soldiers and veterans. According to Moore, many veterans were unable to adapt to the 'new values of the post-war language community' and thus felt ostracised or simply remained silent about the war. Soldiers' language is often difficult for today's civilians to understand because it was formed on the battlefield, composed of expressions in war reportage, propaganda and literature.⁹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Moore points out that

⁹⁴⁵ Twomey, p.198.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.201.

⁹⁴⁷ Beaumont and Witcomb, p.73

⁹⁴⁸ Moore, *Writing War*, p.244.

the veterans' feelings of isolation from the post-war community were amplified by the 'sense of truth-telling', which increasingly became powerful among them.⁹⁴⁹

This mentality of veterans became a significant driver for ex-POWs and former IJA servicemen to publish their memoirs. The film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* became a trigger for both sides to speak to the public proactively. The common ground for the two former enemies was that the film was not telling the truth and that the public should know the truth. In the meeting of Adams, Jarvis, Futamatsu and Sugano, both sides agreed to this effect. Also, Toosey decided to publish his memoirs in the form of his biography in order to correct the wrong image of the POWs spread by the film. Even General Percival sent a letter to the film production, expressing his concern about the wrong image.

Notably, Moore suggests that due to the problems with trauma and the unreliability of memory, soldiers' writings may seem entirely separate from war experience but that the effects of unwritten experiences could still be found on the composition of their writings.⁹⁵⁰ This thesis explored such unwritten or unrecognised experiences of the POWs and the IJA servicemen by comparing and analysing their writings from various perspectives in order to ascertain what happened on the railway.

Conclusion

This research focused on differences in cultures and mentalities among various groups on the railway and discerned blind spots in the prevailing account. It is necessary to review the scope of the existing account based on particular groups' perspective and find out other perspectives hidden behind the complex mentalities of many groups on the railway. The IJA's brutality is only an aspect of their episodes, although the existing official account was formed based on the war crimes trials and their relevant reports and affidavits, in which the brutality was emphasised.

Also, this research ascertained the 'atrocities' effect in the POWs' shaping of their episodes. There is a tendency for those who experienced atrocities to have a

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.245.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.296.

stronger influence on the episode-shaping than others. This is why F Force stands at the centre of the POWs' narrative. Notably, the war crimes trials were the driving force of the 'F Force factor', the Force's atrocity effect, as Wild played a crucial role in shaping the court evidence. However, it was found that the atrocious episodes Wild provided had credibility problems, which this thesis discussed by comparing his evidence with other sources from different angles. Notably, these credibility issues in the existing account have been overlooked by the military authorities, the press and scholars. Thus, Wild's account of the atrocity on the railway is still regarded as 'authoritative'.

The ex-POWs' collective memory might contain a distortion or an exaggeration of the fact because some 'atrocious' element was necessary to sustain their collective memory in their new environments. By introducing cultural and psychological factors, this research has clarified the limitation of the dominant narrative and set a new approach to analysing episodes of the war, whereas further research is still expected in the areas of POWs' trauma, mentality and collective memory formation.

Appendix I: Railway's camps and stations

List: Camps and Stations along the Burma-Thailand Railway⁹⁵¹

Although both Nong Pladuk, Thailand and Thanbyuzayat, Burma are railheads, the distance measurement begins from Nong Pladuk as starting point in this list. The names and spellings vary by source. The spellings below are based on 'Map of the Thai-Burma Rail Link' made by the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre.

Ban Pong (POWs' arrival point)
Nong Pladuk Station & Camp (0 km)
Khok Mo Station
Ban Pong Mai Station (5 km)
Ruk Khe Station (13 km)
Tha Rua Noi Station & Camp (25 km)
Tha Muang Station & Camp (35 km)
Kanchanaburi Station & Camp (50 km)
Tha Makham (Bridge) Camp
Khao Pun Station (57 km)
Chungkai Camp
Wang Lan Station & Camp (68 km)
Wang Yen Camp
Tha Pong Station (77 km)
Wang Takhian Camp
Ban Khao Station & Camp (87 km)
Tha Kilen Station & Camp (97 km)
Nong Pradai Camp
Arrow Hill(Ai Hit) Station & Camp (108 km)
Wang Pho South Camp

⁹⁵¹ This list is based on 'Map of the Thai-Burma Rail Link' of the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, and the Railway Corps' original map in Yoshikawa, p.344-5.

Wang Pho Central Camp
Wang Pho Station & Camp (Tavoy Road Camp) (114 km)
Wang Pho North Camp
Pukai Camp
Wnag Yai Station & Camp (124 km)
Tha Sao Station & Camp (Nam Tok) (130 km)
Tonchan South Camp
Tonchan Bridge Camp
Tonchan Station & Camp (Central) (139 km)
Tonchan Spring Camp
Tampii South Camp
Tampii Station & Camp (147 km)
Kannyu South Camp
Upper Kannyu Camp
Kannyu No.3 Camp
Kannyu River Camp
Hin Tok Station & Camps (River, Mountain) (155 km)
Hin Tok Cement Camp
Kannyu Station & Kinsaiyok Jungle No.1 Camp (161km)
Saiyok Station & Kinsaiyok Jungle No.2 Camp (167 km)
Kinsaiyok Station & Camp (Main) (171km)
Bhatona Camp
Lin Thin Station & Camp (180 km)
Kui Yae Camp
Kui Yae Station & Kuishi Camp (190 km)
Wang Hin Camp
Hindat Station & Camp (197 km)
Kui Mang Camp
Linson Camp
Prang Kasi South Camp
Prang Kasi Station & Camp (208 km)
Prang Kasi 211 Kilo Camp (211 km)

Ongthi Station & Camp
Bangan Camp
Tha Khanun South Camp
Tha Khanun Station & Camp (218 km)
Tha Khanun Australian Camp
Tha Khanun Base Camp
Tha Khanun North Camp
Nam Chon Yai Station & Camp (229)
A Dutch Camp
Tha Mayo (Majo) Station & Camp (236 km)
Tha Mayo (Majo) Wood Camp
Tamrong Phatho Station & Johnson's Camp (244 km)
Dobb's Camp
Kroeng Krai Station & Camp (250 km)
Swinton's Camp
Konkoita 'H' Force No.2 Camp
Kurikonta Station & Camp (257 km)
Konkoita Station & Camp (Joint Point 262 km)
Lower Thimongtha Camp
Thimongtha Station & Camp (273 km)
Shimo Ni Thea (Lower Nieke) Station & Camp
Ni Thea (Nieke Proper) Station & Camp (281 km)
Tunnel Party Camp
Little Ni Thea (131 Kilo) Camp
Shimo Songkurai (Lower Sonkrai) Camp
122 Kilo Camp
Songkurai (Sonkrai No.2) Station & Camp (294 km)
116 Kilo Camp
Kami Songkurai (Upper Sonkrai) Camp
114 Kilo Camp
Chaunggahla-ya Station & Camp (305 km)
Paya-thanzu Tuang Station & 108 Kilo Camp (The Three Pagodas/ Border)

Aunganaung Station & 105 Kilo Camp (310 km)
Regue Station & 100 Kilo Camp
98 Kilo Camp
Kyondaw Station & 95 Kilo Camp (319 km)
90 Kilo Camp
Lawa Station & 85 Kilo Camp
Apalon Station & 82 Kilo Camp (332 km)
80 Kilo Camp
Apalaine Station & Camp (337 km)
Mezali Station & 75 Kilo Camp (342 km)
70 Kilo Camp
Kami Mezali Station & 65 Kilo Camp (348 km)
Lonsi Station & 62 Kilo Camp (353 km)
Taungzun Staion & 60 Kilo Camp (357 km)
Thanbaya (Tambaya) Station & 55 Kilo Camp (361 km)
Thanbaya Camp
Anankwin Station & 45 Kilo Camp (366 km)
Myettaw Station
Beketaung Station & 40 Kilo Camp (376 km)
Tanyin Station & 35 Kilo Camp
Retphaw Station & 30 Kilo Camp (384 km)
Konnoki Station & 26 Kilo Camp (391 km)
Rabao Staion & 18 Kilo Camp (396 km)
Thetkaw Station & 14 Kilo Camp (401 km)
Wagale Station & 8 Kilo Camp (406 km)
Sin (New)-Thanbyuzayat Station & 4 Kilo Camp (409 km)
Thanbyuzayat Station & Camp (415 km)

Appendix II: Chronology

1941

Oct	
18	Railway Corps started planning the railway construction.
Dec	
8	Pacific War broke out.
12	MOW issued the POW policy to expeditionary armies.
23	The Order of POW Camp was issued.
27	MOW established the POW Information Bureau.

1942

Jan	
3	British Govt inquired whether Japan would apply the Geneva Convention.
29	Japanese Govt replied that ' <i>mutatis mutandis</i> ' would be applied.
Feb	
6	IJA and IJN held a conference to discuss 'Guiding Principles for the War Thereafter'.
9	SAC ordered subordinate Divisions to prepare for the Burma Operation.
12	MOW requested SAC to submit a plan for POW camps.
15	Singapore fell.
20	The Regulation on the Allowance for POWs was issued.
25	Japanese Govt demanded the GSO to return their ships.
late	The Shipping problem became severe. Chief Kato of the GSO's No.3 Department (Transport) was sent to the Southern theatre to deal with the problem.
Mar	
4	GSO ordered the SAC to start the Burma Operation.
7	'Guiding Principles' was approved by the IHQ and the Govt.
8	IJA's No.15 Army occupied Rangoon.
9	IJN started the Operation Towards Ceylon.
12	Railway Corps Commander Hattori issued a 'preparation' order.

13	'Guiding Principles' was formally reported to the Emperor.
15	Railway Corps started the field research for railway construction.
mid	SAC submitted 'Railway Operation Plan for the Burma Operation'.
21	CGS visited Bangkok.
23	SAC' Railway Section Chief talked with the Thai Army about the construction.
late	Railway Corps submitted its construction proposal to the IHQ – declined.
Apr	
3	No.5 Flying Division took an aerial photo of the construction area.
8	CGS returned to Tokyo.
9	CGS reported to Emperor about the situation of the Southern theatre.
18	Doolittle airstrikes on Japan
21	The Detailed Regulation on the Treatment of POWs was issued.
late	Railway Corps obtained the aerial photo and the map.
end	Commander Shimoda of Railway Corps stopped the preparation.
May	
5	IJA issued the Outline Regarding the Treatment of POWs.
14	A Force was dispatched to Burma.
mid	IJA occupied the whole of Burma.
18	SAC's telegram informs its intention to use POWs in the railway construction.
31	31 May IJA offered the Burma-Thailand Railway construction to the Thai Govt.
Jun	
1	IJA formally requested the Thais to permit the POW camp establishment in Ban Pong.
5	Battle of Midway and IJN's defeat.
6	GSO's Operation Chief made a new war policy.
7	IHQ postponed the F/S Operation.
7	IHQ issued the 'preparation' order for the railway construction.
8	GSO officially informed MOW of the IJN's defeat at Midway.
8	Thai-Japanese Joint Conference. IJA requested Thai cooperation.
9	GSO's Transport Chief reported about the Burma-Thailand Railway.
12	IHQ obtained knowledge of the Anglo-Soviet military alliance.
25	Tojo gave instruction to Newly-appointed POW Camp Commanders.

29	GSO decided the Southern Army's new mission.
30	675 POWs arrived in Ban Pong. (3,150 POWs in Ban Pong).
Aug	
15	Thai POW Camp was officially established.
16	Thai POW Camp Command formed Nos.1, 2, and 3 Camps.
Sep	
10	Tarumoto's platoon arrived at Chungkai.
15	60 POWs from No.2 Camp arrived at Chungkai.
16	Thai Govt and IJA agreed to cooperate for the railway construction.
20	Ban Pong's mayor began to employ local labourers.
27	Thai Railway Bureau started the roadbed construction between Ban Pong and Kanchanaburi.
Oct	
1	Thai POW Camp Command established No.4 Camp.
1	3,000 POWs under the 9 th Railway Regiment were transferred to Nos.1 and 2 Camps in Thailand.
9	2,000 POWs moved from Ban Pong to Kanchanaburi.
9	800 POWs of No.2 Camp left Ban Pong for Chungaki.
9	Malaya POW Camp started to transfer 17,000 POWs.
11	600 POWs of No.2 Camp arrived at Chungkai.
13	600 POWs, the first batch of the main party, arrived in Ban Pong from Singapore.
19	Chalker's party arrived in Ban Pong.
21	The Regulation on the Dispatch of POWs was issued.
Nov	
early	IHQ issued the 'construction' order to the Railway Corps.
23	Thai POW Camp Command established No.5 Camp.
late	Labour shortage began at Chungkai and other camps in Thailand.
Dec	
mid	5 th Railway Regiment requested Ba Maw to provide labourers.
mid	Labourer recruitment began in Burma.
18	Ban Pong Incident occurred.

1943

Jan	
7	The Chungkai OWP incident occurred.
10	IHQ inquired possibility of completing the construction by the end of May.
11	A banquet was held in Burma to celebrate the success of the recruitment.
mid	The Wan Lung sick parade incident occurred. Swinton was beaten.
mid	Railway Corps requested the IHQ to recruit 80,000 labourers.
15	Japanese ship 'Moji Maru', transporting POWs, was attacked by the Allied forces off Moulmein, Burma.
16	Commander Shimoda of Railway Corps flew to Burma
26	Commander Shimoda's plane crashed into the jungle, Burma.
Feb	
early	IHQ order to shorten the construction period by four months. (by 31 Aug)
early	POWs of No.5 Camp arrived at Thanbyuzayat, Burma.
17	Japanese Govt sent a reply to the US Govt regarding Doolittle's treatment.
22	IHQ ordered Hiroike's transfer to Japan.
28	The first labourer recruitment ended with 13,950 applicants in Burma.
Mar	
1	The 'Speedo' rush-work period began.
2	IJA requested the Thai Govt. to recruit 13,000 labourers.
3	IJA and Ba Maw Govt. agreed to further labourer recruitment.
3	Commander Shimoda and the aircraft crew's bodies were found.
5	Hiroike left Railway Corps Command and returned to Japan.
9	The Law of the Punishment of POWs was issued.
13	Thai-Japanese joint conference to negotiate labour conditions.
NA	No.6 Camp (6,000 POWs) was established.
Apr	
NA	Transport of 70,000 labourers from Malaya began, completed in Sep.
early	32,184 labourers were recruited in Burma.
early	F Force's transfer was informed, destination not known.
5	Thai Govt's mediation between the IJA and the Chinese Association began.
mid	The rainy season broke.

17	Chinese labourers' dispatches began, completing on 26 May.
18	F Force's first party left Singapore for Thailand.
22	Kanchanaburi Prefecture allowed foreign labourers to enter its territory.
May	
NA	The Railway Corps Command made rules and regulations on labourers.
6	Ba Maw decided to recruit additional 21,000 labourers.
7	F Force Commander Banno arrived at Kanchanaburi.
8	F Force's rear HQ arrived at Tarsao (130 km).
11	Banno arrived at Lower Nieke
15	H Force's first party departed to Thailand.
15	Cholera broke out at Lower Nieke.
15	Wood-Higgs' party arrived at Konkoita.
17	Rickwood's party arrived at Lower Sonkrai.
18	Wood-Higgs' party arrived at Lower Nieke.
19	F Force parties of Trains 7, 8 and 9 left Lower Nieke.
19	Cholera spread at Lower Sonkrai.
23	Ullmann and two majors left Kanyu.
26	Chinese labourers' dispatch completed.
28	IJA requested additional labourers in Thailand.
Jun	
early	17,615 labourers were recruited in Burma.
3	Ullmann's party left Tamuron Pat.
5	Ullmann's party arrived at Konkoita.
5	Tanio arrived in Ban Pong.
13	F Force's medical officer Huston arrived at Nieke with medical supplies.
14	Thai Interior Minister requested Bangkok Governor to talk with the Chinese again.
25	K Force left Singapore for Thailand.
Jul	
NA	IJA requested labour reinforcements to the Malay military administration.
5	Bradley and 9 other POWs escaped from Sonkrai No.2.
15	The second dispatch of Chinese labourers began.

19	Harris wrote to Banno formally requesting to postpone the escapees' executions.
late	21,985 labourers were recruited in Burma.
31	IJA in Burma handed over the whole labour administration to the Burmese.
Aug	
NA	F Force's sick men were evacuated to Tambaya Hospital Camp.
mid	New Commander Ishida arrived at Railway Corps.
23	L Force left Singapore for Thailand.
29	L Force arrived in Kanchanaburi.
31	The second dispatch of Chinese labourers ended.
Sep	
early	Adams carried out a cow drive for 120 km to Konkoita.
NA	Food rations improved in general in No.4 Camp.
19	The railway reached Sonkrai No.2 from the Burmese side.
21	The railway reached Tamaran Pat (244km) from the Thai side.
Oct	
15	Japanese Govt sent the lists of POWs to International Red Cross.
17	The railway was connected from both sides at Konkoita.
25	The railway completion ceremony was held at Konkoita.
Nov	
NA	F Force POWs evacuated the up-country camps to Kanchanaburi.
NA	The Aoki Incident occurred at Sonkrai No.2.
Dec	
NA	F Force returned to Singapore with 3,000 dead.
NA	14,000 Malay labourers and 5,000 Chinese labourers were employed.

1944

Sep	
7	Japanese Ship <i>Rakuyo Maru</i> transporting 1,300 POWs from Singapore to Japan, was sunk by a US submarine.
Dec	
31	Mizutani shot a British POW on suspicion of escaping.

1945

Aug	
15	Japan surrendered.
Sep	
12	Former F Force member Padre Duckworth made a broadcast to London.
18	<i>The Times</i> published the first article about the 'Railway of Death'.
Dec	
NA	Wild went back to England.

1946

Feb	
11	Aoki's trial.
16	Wild returned to Singapore from England.
May	
20	Mizutani's trial began.
Jun	
6	Mizutani's trial ended with the death sentence.
15	Tarumoto was sentenced to life imprisonment.
16	The Singaporean press reported Tarumoto's sentence.
Aug	
1	Williamson was awarded the Distinguished Service Order by the King.
Sep	
10	Wild testified at the Tokyo Tribunal.
25	Wild died in a plane crash in Hong Kong.
25	The trial of Banno and six others began.
Oct	
23	The trial of Banno and six others ended.

1947

Feb	
21	Robertson requested SEALF to provide trials' information.
Mar	

12	Robertson heard that Wakamatsu's sentence was commuted.
Apr	
30	Wakamatsu was executed at the Chang Prison.

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