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At the Mercy of the Enemy: the Record of a Japanese War Criminal

敵の意のままに：日本人戦犯手記

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Abstract

1945年8月の太平洋戦争終戦時に、東南アジアに於いて70万人を超える日本軍軍人が連合軍に降伏した。1947年末までにこれら兵士の9割近くは日本に送還され、残りの兵士は戦争犯罪を犯した疑いで連合軍に拘束され、証拠が出た時点で裁判にかけられた。後者の中には日本の占領地で反体制派を統制、鎮圧し、捕虜収容所を監督する役割を担い、大日本帝国陸軍に於いて強力な影響力を誇った憲兵隊の元隊員も含まれていた。本稿は元憲兵隊軍曹によって戦後書かれた手記を紹介する。その手記の中では、日本の降伏後数ヶ月間に渡って東南アジアの様々な収容所で戦犯容疑者として収容されていた時に豪軍から受けた虐待について記されている。なぜ、1929年のジュネーブ条約の規定に反してこのような捕虜虐待が起こったのか。本稿はこの問いに対する可能性のある答えを提示することを試みる。

キーワード：1. Asian Pacific War 2. War criminal 3. Memoir

Introduction

When the Imperial Rescript of Surrender announcing Japan's acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration was broadcast to the Japanese people on 15th August 1945, there were six million Japanese living outside the home islands (Kobayashi, 2000) and, in the months that followed, over 700,000 Japanese military personnel surrendered to Allied forces in South East Asia alone (Kibata, 2000). In striking contrast to these figures is the small number of Japanese combatants captured as prisoners of war (POWs) during the Asian Pacific conflict, estimates varying between 42,543, the figure given by the wartime Japanese government's POW Information Bureau (Hata, 1996), and 19,500 (Gilmore, 1998). According to Hata (1996), the ratio of Japanese troops captured to those killed in the course of the war was 1:40, compared with 4:1 among Western armies. This preference for death over the dishonour of

surrender, exemplified in the *banzai* suicide charges on Attu Island and Saipan, is generally attributed to the Imperial Japanese Army's Field Service Code (*Senjinkun*) issued in January 1941 in which the Emperor's subject is instructed to guard his reputation zealously: "Never live to experience shame as a prisoner. By dying you will avoid leaving behind the crime of a stain on your honour" (Straus 2003:39). However, as Straus points out:

By the time it was issued, the spirit of the *Senjinkun* was so deeply imbedded in the national psyche that it was more than a military directive to a single service. It had become an imperative not only for the military but also for civilians attached to the military and ultimately for all civilians, including even women and children (Straus, 2003:40).

This reluctance to be taken prisoner was reinforced by a common belief among Japanese troops that it

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would result in torture and death at the hands of the enemy. There was also the fear that, should they be captured and later returned to Japan, their own government would have them shot for transgressing the ban on surrender, a consequence that the Japanese had made known to their servicemen (Fedorowich, 2000). Unsurprisingly, for those who *were* taken prisoner, either willingly or after being wounded, and were repatriated at the end of the war, there appears to have been a desire to keep their former POW status secret and not discuss their treatment in Allied POW camps (Sturma, 2016). Compared with the wealth of literature in English on or by former prisoners of the Japanese, some of which has taken its place in popular culture (e.g., Ernest Gordon's 1962 book *Through the Valley of the Kwai*, later adapted for the cinema as 'To End All Wars', and Eric Lomax's *The Railway Man* of 1995, also adapted for the big screen), their Japanese counterparts in the postwar years produced few accounts of their experiences as POWs, a notable exception being Ooka Shohei's *Furyoki* (1952), translated into English as *Taken Captive*. Even in Ooka's case, however, the stigma attached to surrender was still alive nearly thirty years after the event, as evidenced by his unwillingness to accept a literary prize in 1971 because of the shame that he continued to feel (Roland, 1996).

This paper focuses on the post-surrender experiences of a former *Kempeitai* officer, Misaka Tatsuo, through a translation into English of his 'Notes of a War Criminal' (*Sempanshuki*). Written at the instigation of a *Kempeitai* veterans' association and covering the period from October 1945 to the end of December 1946, this account is handwritten on nineteen numbered sheets of A5 size paper and describes his treatment in captivity by the Australian military while awaiting interrogation for war crimes. Although the 'Notes' are not dated, the author reveals that they are based on notes originally written on pages of a memo pad while he was held in Sugamo Prison in Tokyo in the early 1950s.

Some biographical details

Little is known about Misaka Tatsuo's military career. It seems that he seldom spoke about this time of his life, even to his family. He was born the eldest of eleven children in Fukuoka, west Japan, in January 1919, and his early years were spent in Osaka. His father's work took the family to Busan (Fuzan in Japanese-controlled Korea) when the young Tatsuo was five and he lived there until his late teens. After preparatory study at a youth training institute (*Seinenkunrenjo*), he enrolled in the elite Nakano School (*Rikugun Nakano Gakko*) in Tokyo, the main training centre for Japan's military intelligence operations. Such was the secrecy surrounding this school for spies that graduates were forbidden to talk about it or about the training that they had received. This would explain, at least in part, Misaka's reticence on the subject of his wartime career. He was inducted into the *Kempeitai*, Japan's military secret police, in January 1940, a few days before his 21st birthday. From his 'Notes' we learn that he served in the Keijo (Seoul) *Kempeitai* before being posted to Borneo, which had come under Japanese control in March 1942. By the time Japanese forces surrendered to Allied troops in September 1945, Misaka was a sergeant in the Tawau *Kempei* unit of the 37th Army *Kempeitai* and, along with 2,900 other Japanese soldiers in Tawau, was transferred to Jesselton (present-day Kota Kinabalu). He was imprisoned in the Labuan Island Internment Camp for War Criminals and was later transferred to Jurong Camp and Changi Jail, both in Singapore. He was repatriated to Japan in 1950, being officially demobilized in March of that year, and was subsequently detained in Sugamo Prison. What crime he was convicted of, and what length of sentence he was given, remains unknown, and he may have been released soon after the American occupation of Japan ended in 1952. He was definitely free by 1958 when the Japanese government decided to release all war criminals from prison (Felton, 2012). Following his release, he returned to Osaka and set up an optician's shop

selling jewellery and watches in addition to eyewear. He died in February 1997 aged 78.

Misaka refers in his memoir to the fact that he was a member of the *Kempeitai* and that this had some bearing on the way he was treated by his captors, so it is worth briefly considering this institution and the increasing influence that it exerted on the Japanese power structure during, and in the decade prior to, the Asian Pacific War. In their own historical records (*Nihon Kenpei Seishi*) *Kempeitai* veterans admit that their primary role was one of control and suppression (Shimer and Hobbs, 2010), and the methods that they employed to achieve this objective spread terror through the population. Sometimes compared to the Gestapo in Nazi Germany (Russell, 1958; Felton, 2012), they targeted leftwing dissidents and pacifists in Japan and cracked down on anti-Japanese activities in the overseas territories under Japanese control. During the war the *Kempeitai* were in charge of POW camps where, in filthy, overcrowded and disease-ridden conditions, prisoners were routinely subjected to brutal treatment by their guards. Among the native population of north Borneo, where Misaka spent his final posting, a climate of fear and suspicion was rife:

The *Kempeitai* was literally 'everywhere'; its network of informers could be one's neighbour or a casual acquaintance or simply anyone who might report on your intransigencies. Notoriously violent, cruel and sadistic, the *Kempeitai* sent shudders throughout the local community. Their *modus operandi* of 'torture preceding interrogation' was legendary and largely contributed to the general atmosphere of fear amongst the population (Ooi, 2011:53).

The *Kempeitai* was officially disbanded by General MacArthur in November 1945 but few former members were repatriated directly to Japan. Most were investigated for war crimes, those charged being put on trial in the countries where their alleged crimes were committed (Narayanan, 2002).

In these B and C class trials, lower-ranking *Kempei* officers and men came off worse than regular army troops. In Java alone almost two out of every five ex-*Kempeitai* were convicted of war crimes, while for regular Japanese soldiers the figure was one in every four hundred (Shimer and Hobbs, 2010). It would appear, therefore, that Misaka's *Kempeitai* background played a significant role in his fate post surrender.

In the following translation of Misaka Tatsuo's *Sempanshuki* ('Notes of a War Criminal'), the section headings are those of the original author.

Notes of a War Criminal

When I happened to attend a meeting in Shirahama of the Borneo *Kempeitai* Veterans' Association, I was asked by General Secretary Furukawa to write and publish any notes I had. While I was held at Sugamo Detention Centre, I made up my mind to eventually organize the notes I wrote in my cell. These painful memories of the postwar period, written as a testament for my family, were pasted together with boiled rice grains and placed in a box and I treasure them as an heirloom.

Among these memories, the first is of war criminals and slave ships, from disembarking from the Australian slave ship to the Labuan Island prisoner-of-war camp. Together with recollections of the miscellaneous chores imposed on us by the Australian military police and those of the Jurong internment camp in Singapore, I stitched together my record.

War criminals and slave ships

This is a true record of what I personally experienced, a form of retaliation for the cruelty and ill-treatment I received day and night, memories of which persist for a lifetime. After the war ended they were drunk with the feeling of victory while we, with our weapons snatched from us and unable to resist, were as defenceless as babies and violently

mistreated to a point just short of being killed, with no time to catch our breath. These events date back to October following the end of the war. At that time I was serving in the Tawau *Kempeitai* regiment of the 37th Army *Kempeitai* in Borneo. After the Tawau Incident, public order among the native population was stable, and not a single enemy soldier had come ashore during the war. Unlike in other regions, there were no prisoner-of-war related problems, and, while urban areas were being abandoned, with enemy aircraft attacking before and after the landing on Tarakan Island in southern Borneo, there was no engagement with the enemy.

In mid-October contact with the natives was forbidden by order of Australian Military Headquarters and it was impossible to purchase food supplies. We had previously adopted a self-sufficient attitude so we lived on tapioca and wild *warabi* bracken. Suddenly, on 21st October, we were ordered to embark without a moment's delay and, with just a government-issued knapsack and accompanied by a battalion of guards, all twenty-one members of the *Kempeitai* and about eight hundred Japanese residents were assembled. On the way to the jetty I was frequently ordered to stop by Australian soldiers waiting in ambush on the road, and by carrying out body searches they stole just about everything of value among my personal belongings, such as my watch and fountain pen. Some things were thrown away into a river or were given to native onlookers. Finally, we were put aboard a ship and, with no idea of our destination, we set out to sea.

At daybreak on the second day, the ship suddenly stopped and the order was given: "*Kempeitai* only go ashore first." I sensed that something was going on. The landing craft was still about one hundred metres from the beach and, as there were no boats to ferry us ashore, we hesitated. An Australian sailor suddenly shouted at us in an angry voice, "Kammon! Harriap!" and raised a stick aloft over his head. Not understanding what he said, we all stripped naked and, with just a few belongings perched on our heads, we jumped into the sea. The morning seawater was

cold but we finally reached the beach. A nearby Australian soldier took liberties rummaging through our personal belongings. After he left, an official came to search us but we had nothing valuable left. Around that time Japanese civilians, including women and children, were starting to come ashore in inflatable boats.

Naked as we were, we were made to run at double time on the beach for about an hour. I found out that this place was Jesselton. Eventually, someone who seemed to be an inspector came and noted down our names and unit, and finally we were allowed to put on our clothes. The Australian soldier from before reappeared and all of a sudden started kicking and hitting us, amusing himself by throwing afar the clothes we were trying to put on.

At length one of the Australian soldiers led us off. After we had walked about 300 metres along the shore, he suddenly pointed out to sea and shouted again, "Kammon! Harriap!" None of us understood what was said and, as we stood there in a daze, a group of seven or eight men dressed in swimwear and intent on aggression jumped from a landing boat and made their way towards us. They arrived in force, unleashing violence on us without warning. They seemed to be telling us to get on board again. Still in our military uniforms, we set off towards the ship out at sea. As we did so, we were pushed down into the water, kicked and punched. In the end we could offer no resistance. If we came up to the surface, a large man would sit astride us so that we went under again. He didn't even give us time to catch our breath. I threw away my belongings, my mind fixed on getting to the ship as quickly as possible, but my movements were restricted and my vision clouded, and I felt half-dead. Ah, this is hell on earth, I thought. My comrades-in-arms were receiving the same abuse. Faced with continuous humiliation, I resolved to die and tried to reach the ship's hull, but a sailor dived into the water and pulled me up. On a certain signal the abuse was all at once brought under control. The water was coming up to my chin, but I finally caught hold of a door on the ship and they gestured to me to climb up.

With great effort I tried to raise my body, heavy as lead, but it wouldn't move. Push them up from behind, someone shouted.

Although this was an action that people who live together daily naturally understand, there was confusion to an unimaginable degree. Our commanding officer was the first to be pushed up. As they raised him, they shouted at him loudly and then chased him with a square piece of timber till he disappeared into the ship's interior. I expected more abuse but couldn't avoid being hauled up, and, as we were pushed up one by one, we were struck with the timber. For the Australians it might have been half in fun, but we were desperate as we ran about twenty metres into the dimly lit interior. Here and there we encountered groups of men whose job it was to dish out rough treatment, and, wielding rods over their heads, they looked like demons. All of a sudden I received head-on a blast of water from a hose and it knocked me over. Then I was punched and kicked again. Finally, we were made to take off our uniforms and use them as rags to scrub the deck.

There was no sensation in my backside, leaving it free from pain, and I crawled along with a rigid posture as I rubbed the deck, my throat parched from the seawater I had swallowed. Water from the hose had flooded the ship's hold and, before long, we were told through gestures to scoop the water with both hands and throw it overboard. We scooped up the water and took it to the prow of the ship about twenty metres away to get rid of it. I acted knowing the absurdity of this order. Soaked with sweat and bitter tears, I couldn't run five metres without the water I had scooped up leaking away through my fingers, while they chased and struck me from behind.

This happened to all of us. If that was not enough, I was also kicked in the backside and sent headlong into the sea. When I eventually managed to crawl back on board, I was made to run again. My parched throat was choking me and I had no idea how much time passed as these actions were repeated. None of our group collapsed with exhaustion, though. We knew that, if we didn't move, there would be a

heavier punishment, so, gasping for breath, we just kept moving. After a while, the branch manager of the Nissan Agriculture and Forestry Company, Chief of Police Hiroba and Inspector Nagata were pushed forward. The branch manager, who was thought to be over 60 years old, was forced to do the same work as us. What a cruel spectacle it was!

I don't know how much time elapsed, but one or two of the sailors involved in the ill-treatment disappeared from view. A high-ranking officer came and seemed to tell us to stop work. The area round about us was covered in water. My tired body felt as limp as cotton and I had a sense of being hardly alive. Glancing at my comrades' faces, though, I could feel how admirably we had survived up till now, watching out for each other. We simply stood there in a stupor, holding our uniforms that had substituted as rags. One of us had a bucket, and he went off following a sailor and soon returned carrying fresh water. Extreme fatigue and fear over what challenges still lay ahead prevented us from approaching the water. The Australian officer said, "O.K." and went off somewhere. Everyone silently picked up the lid of their mess kit and in turn received some water. Our bellies seemed swollen with hunger. Someone said, "I'm glad none of us is badly injured and we're all alive." In this way we cheered one another up. When we had finished drinking the water, two men were led away but returned holding their bags.

Presently, we got some food. Thirty minutes after we had eaten, the next step was to transport wheat flour. The distance was only three metres but, once we had carried a sack to the designated place, the next person had to carry it back to the original place. This was obviously not work but abuse designed to pass the time. When someone staggered, he was kicked and fell down. He would then have to get up again and carry the sack. Our whole bodies became white with flour and we could only tell one person apart from another by their eyes and nose. Like sodden rats covered in flour we truly cut pathetic figures. My eyes were overflowing with tears of vexation. How long would we have to work like

this? Eventually, an order came from the hatch to climb up the stairs and come out on deck. We were told to wash ourselves so we went to the shower room and rinsed off the flour from our bodies.

The next task was to clean the toilets. I scrubbed the toilet bowl with my hand and it felt really shameful. Then we had to scrub the passageway. I thought to myself, 'You can still move.' It felt strange to be alive. The Nissan Agriculture and Forestry branch manager was sitting down in the passageway with dressings on his hand and head as a result of the injuries he got while being kicked. He was probably resting after receiving medical treatment and, being envious, I asked him to hit me in a part of my body blood was coming from. Soon we had our second break and I sat down in the passageway for about thirty minutes.

The tiredness I had experienced up to now hit me all at once and I became drowsy. Even if I pinched myself, my nerves were paralysed and I felt nothing, just like a stone. I could just sigh, why did I have to suffer such cruelty? Why did those who lost the war have to be punished? For the first time in my life I was in a living hell. A sailor appeared and asked me in Malay, "What do you lot eat?" Up till now we had been treated wretchedly like animals and to be spoken to suddenly in a humane way made us suspicious. We were all cautious and didn't reply. Then someone said in Malay, "Telemakashi" [Thank you]. In the end they handed us some hard biscuits which we ate ravenously. After we had finished eating, we were given one cigarette each and for the first time a look of relief came upon everyone's face.

There was a group of sailors who handed out rough treatment and a 'friendly' group, and this slave ship arranged things very systematically. After our thirty-minute break, the previous group who had handled us roughly came storming back and the violence started once again. Because I didn't scream, no matter how much I was hit, the treatment gradually became harsher. I thought to myself, no matter what happens I won't cry out.

Memories of the Labuan Island internment camp for war criminals

The MP (military policeman) who came on board our slave ship took a look at our mud-caked clothes and vacant expressions and said, "If any of you have been bullied while in transit, tell me." Nobody answered because, once group violence is over and done with, there's no point in arguing about it. The MP gave orders to disembark and left. The harbour on Labuan Island was narrow at the jetty and we were climbing up the rope ladder attached to the side of the third ship. As we did so, they began kicking us from above and hurling our caps about. We finally crawled up on board, but now the sailors were lined up in two rows and, as we passed between them, they kicked us to the ground as if we were footballs. On the way up the next rope ladder I was kicked by leather boots, so I was anxious to pass through the crew quickly. At last I climbed down onto the jetty. There were three MPs and they told me to get on a truck. I didn't have the strength to climb up into it myself, but my war pals pushed me up onto a seat. The senior warrant officer and the Nissan Agriculture and Forestry branch manager were sighing, their eyes shiny with tears.

From the truck I saw *pisang* [fried banana] hanging from the front of a street stall. During the war I had made two short visits to Labuan Island. Next to the customs house there was a *Kempeitai* station, and when I passed through it Sergeant Shinohara would treat us to mountain and marine delicacies in the drawing room overlooking the sea. The town brought back memories of skillful haircuts given by overseas Chinese and ear cleaning that sent you to sleep. I heard that Labuan Island had witnessed honourable deaths, and this might be the place where we, too, were to die. Surviving any longer seemed difficult for the four remaining soldiers of the Keijo [Seoul] *Kempeitai* who had come to Borneo. After a thirty-minute ride in separate trucks we arrived at the Labuan Internment Camp for Japanese War Criminals. Through the two-layered barbed wire fence I could

make out five tent pavilions. A sentry at the entrance glared at me as I went inside. I could see the face of Captain Kuroshima among those who had previously arrived from Sandakan prisoner-of-war camp.

There was a Japanese man with a commander's armband on his left arm. He was to assist us because he spoke English, but before long we knew that this was a mistake. At a time when we were mutually craving brotherly love, some traitors were betraying secrets to the Australian army and enforcing the order that we salute the scum. The belongings of the newcomers were inspected by the Australians and suitably distributed. For some reason the directive that my former subordinate, Sergeant Sugino, be held as a prisoner of war was nullified, and he died a noble death on the gallows in Rabaul. A certain senior colonel who was facing execution, in spite of a plea for clemency from Mrs. Keith who had been under house arrest on Berhala Island during the war and is well known for *Three Came Home*, took his own life in Rabaul Camp. Colonel Aikawa, the president of Miri Fuel, also committed suicide. By the time these men left Labuan, spies were everywhere and our people were killed because of accusatory reports. I heard that people in Jesselton waiting to be sent back to Japan knew of these reports and that someone on board the repatriation ship *Katsuragi* had been summoned and cross-examined. Furthermore, I heard that someone registered as coming from Shizuoka went around swindling bereaved family members of the 'Yaezu Fleet' once he returned to Japan, and this became a police matter. On the second and third day after we entered the camp, the Australians took photographs of us and enquired about our personal details. While the MPs were guarding us there was hardly any abuse, but when the regular units took over guard duty they would come and attack the camp at night. In addition to acts of looting and violence, they would knock down the tents before withdrawing. If you went to the toilet during the night and gave a bad salute, they made you run fast many times round the camp. Every day we were recruited for labour and

assigned work outside the camp and there were both difficult and easy jobs, as well as work for the MPs and work levelling the ground of the sports field.

Memories of the miscellaneous chores done for the Australian MPs

When we were lined up for work detail, a non-commissioned MP officer came and told us *Kempeitai* to step forward. I was standing nearby so I was pulled out. They would probably exploit us, I thought, but with the regular troops it was to a different degree, so I didn't think it would be like the harsh treatment we suffered on the slave ship. However, that they were designating *Kempeitai* soldiers was suspicious. We went out through the gate and were loaded onto two tractor jeeps. As we climbed aboard, native children pelted us with stones. The jeep with the Japanese soldiers who hadn't been accused of war crimes started to move off. We noticed them waving at us and calling out, "Keep up the good work." They probably knew who we were because of the numbers we had on the side of our caps and because these same soldiers were assigned heavy labour in the camp too. We arrived at what appeared to be the headquarters of the military police. A lieutenant came out of the office and the twelve of us were handed shovels and trowels as he assigned us to clean the ditches.

Inside the camp off-duty soldiers were lying down. Their faces all looked the same, like the sailors on the slave ship. We were all working silently. There was one guard but he didn't act violently towards us or even say "Kammon." A mate next to me said, "Hey! These MPs are better than I thought. I wouldn't mind doing this every day if this is what it's like." We would signal to each other, and only when the MP came over to us did we work seriously. The knack was to know how much you could rest. If you were called to do odd jobs, they rewarded you with a cigarette, and the time spent cleaning the muddy ditches passed quickly. The midday meal I had brought with me consisted of a packet of biscuits, but I was given half a tin of

sardines and some coffee by the MPs' cook.

It was the sort of humane treatment I had never anticipated. The camp was brutal but the work outside was OK, I thought. After lunch the cook ordered me to cut a metal drum in half. The noise I made cutting it up with a hammer and chisel was loud, and there were yells of complaint from the soldiers in the camp trying to sleep. I conveyed this fact through gestures to the cook who got angry and went to protest. He came back grumbling to himself, however, led me off into the jungle and told me to do the work there. Rolling the drum, I went to a spot where I couldn't be observed and settled into position. For about an hour the sound of the chisel striking the drum resounded through the jungle. When I had finally finished cutting the drum, I rolled it back to the cook. "OK," he said and I was unexpectedly rewarded with a pack of *Koua* [Asian Development] cigarettes. I went back to my pals and gave them each a cigarette. They seemed content with their first army cigarette in a long time. When the afternoon's work was done, we went back by jeep to the camp. Such work continued for about twenty days.

Memories of how we were half killed levelling the ground for the sports field

Work given to us *Kempeitai* was labourers' work but, compared with the slave ship it was as different as heaven from hell. The next job assigned to us was levelling the ground for the sports field. After breakfast we lined up in two rows waiting for work. All the troops coming through the main gate were rough guys with automatic rifles slung over their shoulders. The guy next to me said, "There's that fellow from the slave ship." Well, we won't be getting back from work scot-free today, I thought. The person in charge of the work explained that, for the time being, all of us would be working on the sports field.

The troops from Tawau, in particular, sent shivers down my spine. There were five trucks waiting for us when we went out through the gate, and

somehow the atmosphere was bad. There was a roll call assigning us to each truck and, as we got on board, they called in a loud voice for the latecomers to hurry up. The trucks set off with five guards in each truck and stopped in front of a vast sports field. At the same time a voice called out, "Kammon!" and we jumped down from the trucks. After another roll call the guards were allotted a number of men each and I went to the middle of the field carrying a shovel.

It was so hot that I had to take off my jacket. All of a sudden, a guard pointed at a wheelbarrow and struck me painfully on the backside. I suppose I was meant to transport soil in the barrow but there was no interpreter, unfortunately, so I wasn't sure what to do. Just then, they called out names looking for someone. Sergeant Major Sugino (from Sandakan prisoner-of-war camp) and Captain Murakami (the company commander in the Jesselton district) were both in my group. From this point things became really serious. Five or six Australian troops approached carrying heavy sticks. Sugino and Murakami were each ordered to fill a drum with soil and run with it on their shoulders. They eventually filled the drums up with soil and, limping as they went, started to run with them. After being kicked to the ground, they were subjected from above to flying kicks to the belly and back with army boots, and soon they were groaning in agony. It was so cruel I couldn't look. At length, the two men, groaning pathetically, collapsed with exhaustion, unable to stand up anymore. Even a robust physique would be at the utmost limits of life if kicked to such a degree. Later, Sergeant Major Sugino, accused by some traitor, was to disappear like the dew in Rabaul. At last the punishment of the two men was halted and three of the troops left apparently satisfied. The three remaining now came towards us. I was running, pushing the wheelbarrow, but one of them put his leg out and I tripped head over heels. I was kicked with army boots and, rising quickly to my feet, was struck with sticks. There was nothing I could do. Summoning all my strength, I started working like crazy but the

cruel sticks kept coming. My whole body was covered in cuts and I tried, unsuccessfully, to stand up. All around I could hear screams. Finally, a whistle signalled a stop in the work. The next thing I noticed, I was sitting down hungry and exhausted.

I heard from Captain Murakami at the midday meal that, as company commander of a small army force, he had fought bravely and resolutely against the Australians when these had come ashore at Jesselton. Unaware that the war had ended, this force had put up resistance in a jungle campaign until mid-October. They were a force to be looked up to. As soldiers they were prepared to fight to the death without surrender. In the postwar period this noble spirit of fighting for one's country was not acknowledged. He was subjected to retaliatory measures by the Australian army who saw him as their bitter enemy and singled him out arbitrarily for ill-treatment. He ended up in Changi before returning to Japan in February 1947.

Memories of the POW camp on Jurong Island, Singapore

We were transferred from Labuan Island to Changi, Singapore, where, on two meals a day, we battled with hunger. We suffered mental anguish from interrogations and trials, and many of my fellow countrymen were executed or sentenced to fixed terms of imprisonment. However, most of us from the Tawau *Kempeitai* were moved from Changi Jail to Jurong Camp on December 21st, 1946. The ones who went to Jurong at this time were those who had been cleared of war crimes and those from ordinary units waiting for a chance to return to Japan. With each unit in their lodgings, there was a peaceful atmosphere to camp life. I was involved in demobilization duties and, during the day, was busy drawing up a register of names for embarkation and putting together documents. Because of a breakdown in the repatriation ship's engine shaft, though, our shipping out was postponed and we were called back to Changi. The following day was New Year's Day and I wanted at least something in

the shape of a rice cake, but there was nothing. Then I suddenly remembered that I could make rice cakes out of tapioca tubers.

There were no tapioca plants inside the compound. The surrounding area was secured with barbed wire entanglements and the vigilance was unrelenting. I decided to get outside somehow, but there was a danger of the natives kicking up a fuss and shooting me dead. It was risking death to dig for tubers but three spirited young men supported my idea. Another two decided to wait till sunset to pick *rambutan* [a tropical fruit].

It was an adventure but everyone's expectations were raised. We would need full gunnysacks. Lightly dressed and with our legs wrapped in puttees for support, we set out from the camp. In the moonlit night the road was well lit and conditions were favourable. During the daytime I had scouted the neighbouring terrain. Just after we had passed under the first barbed wire fence and were lying flat on the ground, a soldier approached on patrol ten metres ahead of us to our left. He came closer holding his automatic rifle. Prostrating ourselves, we waited for him to pass by. We made sure he was out of sight and then advanced. I got through the second barbed wire fence and urged the others to follow. At five-metre intervals we pushed our way through the long grass, crossed over the road and reached the highway.

We could see the lights from a native village across the road. There were voices so I told the others that each of us should advance as far as the hill and I rushed out first. We all ran at full speed to the hill, then lay flat on the ground to assess the situation. We entered a wild tapioca field, pulled up the tubers by their roots and put them in our gunnysacks. In the wild the tubers are small so we went into another field closer to the houses to steal the tapioca. A dog started barking and danger was closing in on us. We pulled up the tubers faster, sparing little time to check what was going on around us. The sound we made pulling got louder but my sack was only four-fifths full. Just then, a mate below me said, "Someone's coming from the

road” so I hurriedly hoisted my sack onto my shoulders and set off down the slope. Over in the village they seemed to have noticed us and were making a noise. A man in a white shirt was waving his hands in the air. The fellow behind me wasn’t carrying anything, and when I asked him what had happened, he said, “The full sack was too heavy. I couldn’t run.” I hurried back to get the sack and he was right—it was full. I used all my strength to lift it onto my shoulders and ran down the hill. I crossed over the road and ran into the forest where I found my three comrades hiding.

Someone was coming towards us and, looking closely, I saw it was a Japanese soldier. “Hey!” I called out. This startled him and he made as if to run away but then sat down. “I can’t do it today,” he said. “I’ve just been chased after escaping.” He informed us that the sentry on patrol had just passed so we were all right for thirty minutes. After a rest, we crossed the road and ran to the barbed wire fences.

The four of us eventually got back safely to the camp. All the inmates came out to welcome us and flattered us saying our ‘distinguished service’ deserved a medal. After that, we all split up into groups, some building a fire, others grating the tubers with tin cans, and in about two hours the New Year rice cakes were ready to eat, reminding us of the rice cake pounding in our home towns.

Final thoughts

The treatment accorded Japanese prisoners of war in Allied POW camps is generally held to have been in line with the provisions laid down in the 1929 Geneva Convention (MacKenzie, 1994) —for example, food, accommodation and clothing to be on an equal footing to that provided to the soldiers that captured them, prisoners to be treated humanely at all times and protected from acts of violence or reprisals. That being the case, how is it possible to account for the bullying and physical abuse, the beatings, kicking and half-drowning described by Misaka in his ‘Notes’? The end of hostilities in August 1945 and the subsequent freeing of Allied

captives might have been one factor. As MacKenzie (1994) points out: “(T)he end of fears concerning retaliation against Allied POWs meant that while the treatment of those Japanese prisoners taken earlier in the war remained the same, conditions among the huge number of surrendered personnel taken after August 1945 were often below Geneva Convention standards” (p. 158). Exemplifying this, asserts MacKenzie, was “a certain amount of vindictive callousness among Allied troops” (1994:158). Indeed, the Australia–Japan Research Project (AJRP) has found that Australian attitudes towards the Japanese hardened in the period soon after the end of the war, when the trials of former Japanese military for war crimes were widely publicized. Among the AJRP interviews of Australian veterans, for instance, we find this exchange with a former sergeant in the Australian Military Forces, Jack Flanagan:

Interviewer: With the atrocities that were then known to have happened and many men would have good reason to feel that they wanted to revenge themselves against the Japanese. Did you see Japanese who were knocked about in that situation?

Flanagan: Oh, yes, yes. That is what I say. We hear a lot about what they did to us but we were in the same boat. Perhaps not as bad but it was there, that, this is the enemy, let’s destroy him. It was there all of the time.

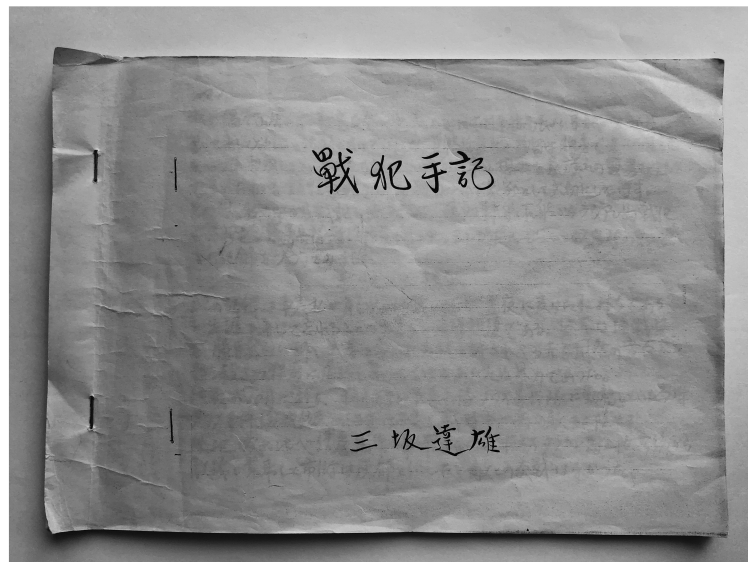
[From The Australia–Japan Research Project, 1996]

Another factor militating against Misaka and his companions during their incarceration was that they were not officially classed as prisoners of war—which, under the Geneva Convention, would have protected them from being pressed into hard labour—but as Japanese Surrendered Personnel, a status first proposed by Japan’s Imperial Headquarters after the August 15th surrender to encourage Japanese servicemen to submit to Allied control (Connor, 2010).

What attitudes can we detect in Misaka's memoir? Is there irony in his use of the term 'war criminal'? Or is there perhaps an innate pride in being given this label (he is officially recorded as War Criminal number 1011 in the National Archives of Australia), a pride stemming from former Japanese military prowess? Nowhere in the 'Notes' do we find an intimation that the suffering that he endured was in any way deserved, that he was being punished by fate for past misdemeanours. Instead, the predominant tone is one of victimhood, even self-pity, which is understandable when we remember that his intended readership was fellow *Kempeitai* veterans, a group in the habit of regarding themselves as victims of 'victors' justice' (see Shimer and Hobbs, 2010, pp. 76ff). By describing the humiliation and cruelties to which he was subjected, the 'Notes' became a 'form of retaliation'. Perhaps they were also a form of therapy (Towle, 2000), though Misaka makes clear that the memories of what he endured in captivity never faded. Among these dark memories we also find examples of humane behaviour by the adversary, random acts of kindness that Misaka finds totally unexpected. The general thrust of his recollections, however, must surely lead us to abandon the oversimplified dichotomy of good versus evil, the civilised versus the barbaric. Modern warfare can have a dehumanizing effect on all who are called upon to engage in it. The Singaporean educator,

Elizabeth Choy, recognised this. Despite being subjected to barbaric forms of torture while under interrogation by the *Kempeitai* in October 1942, she was adamant, once the war ended, that the men responsible for her terrifying ordeal should not be put to death. "If not for war," she said, "they would be just like me. They would be at home with their family, doing just ordinary things and peaceful work. Let us pray that there will be no more war" (quoted in Felton, 2012:94).

Looking back, at the end of the twentieth century, on the history of total war, the social historian Eric Hobsbawm painted a bleak picture of the effect that war has had upon mankind: "(W)e have become relatively insensitive to atrocity; our voice of moral outrage has been silenced and we have been 'brainwashed into accepting barbarity'" (quoted in Beaumont, 1996:277). The treatment of prisoners of war since 1945—for example, in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia—and the notoriety attached to cases of prisoner abuse at Bagram, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo bear witness to a gradual shift away from a humanitarian standpoint to one that views the captive as an embodiment of an alien ideology—the 'other'—incapable of arousing empathy. The vigilance and scrutiny of non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch remain, unfortunately, as essential today as they have ever been.



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