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Memorializing Prisoners of War in Japan: Local Activism, War Criminals, and Reconciliation

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ABSTRACT
During the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific theatres, 36,000 Allied Prisoners of War (POWs) were held in camps across Japan's home islands. After the war, twenty-five memorials were built for these POWs. This paper analyses a selection of these memorials that together reveal major factors that have shaped POW memorials in Japan. Many were created by local activists, and emerged in cooperation with former POWs and their descendants to foster reconciliation, or forged links to nuclear bomb victims and forced Asian labour. Some were built by companies for their own interests or reflected tensions between sympathy for POWs and executed prison guard personnel.

Introduction

Allied Prisoners of War (POWs) were interned in around 130 camps within Japan's home islands of Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, and Hokkaido during the Second World War.[1] Despite this, accounts of camps outside Japan, especially in South East Asia, dominate the popular imagination and academic work on POWs.[2] In particular, former camps, forced labour projects, and museums and memorials for Allied POWs in Thailand and Singapore attract thousands of visitors annually.[3] In contrast, domestic

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[1]There were no POW camps in Okinawa.

[2]*Unbroken*, a major motion picture released in 2014 that focused primarily on POW camps in Japan, including Ōfuna, Ōmori, and Naoetsu, is a notable recent exception.

[3]Joan Beaumont, 'The Thai-Burma railway: A cultural route?', *The Historic Environment*, 25, 3 (2013), pp. 100-113; Anoma Pieris, 'Divided histories of the Pacific War: Revisiting "Changi's" (post)colonial heritage', in Mirjana Ristic and Sybille Frank (eds.),

POW camps and related sites are essentially unknown by visitors to Japan and attract less academic attention. Even within Japan, there is limited awareness, with a greater media emphasis there on Japan's own victimisation in events like the atomic and fire bombing of Japanese cities, or debates about the atrocities committed by Japan's military forces in China and South East Asia.[4] Research networks, specifically the Roger Mansell Group and the POW Research Network Japan (POWRNJ), have played a crucial role in outlining and sharing the history of these POW camps online.[5] Outside these networks, research has focused on individual camps: David Palmer's work on POWs and the Miike Coal Mine and, with Mick Broderick, a focus on POWs affected by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki; Sarah Kovner on the Fukuoka POW Camp 1; Anoma Pieris on the Naoetsu POW Camp; and William Underwood and others on the exploitation of POWs at Aso Mining's Yoshikuma Coal Mine.[6] In Japanese, apart from the POWRNJ's recently-published encyclopaedia, research on POW camps in Japan has likewise focused primarily on general wartime policies, and individual camps and cemeteries.[7]

Urban Heritage in Divided Cities: Contested Pasts, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 107-124.

[4]On Japanese memory of war, including competing discourses of Japan as hero, victim, or perpetrator, see Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[5]Roger Mansell Group, 'Center for Research Allied POWs Under the Japanese', http://www.mansell.com/. Accessed 18 October 2023. The POWRNJ website contains reports on individual camps in Japanese, and some in English. See http://www.powresearch.jp/en/archive/index.html. Accessed 26 July 2024. For more on POWRNJ, see Kamila Szczepanska, 'Addressing the Allied POW Issue in Japan: The Case of POW Research Network Japan', *Japan Forum*, 26, 1 (2014), pp. 88-112.

[6]Mick Broderick and David Palmer, 'Australian, British, Dutch and US POWs: Living under the shadow of the Nagasaki Bomb', *Japan Focus*, 13, 32, 3 (2015), https://apjjf.org/2015/13/32/Mick-Broderick/4358.html. Accessed 26 July 2024; Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire: Inside Japanese POW Camps,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); David Palmer, 'Japan's World Heritage Miike Coal Mine: Where prisoners-of-war worked "like slaves"', *Japan Focus*, 19, 13, 1 (2021), https://apjjf.org/2021/13/Palmer.html. Accessed 26 July 2024; Anoma Pieris, 'Empire of camps' and 'Intersectional sovereignty' in Anoma Pieris and Lynne Horiuchi, *The Architecture of Confinement: Incarceration Camps of the Pacific War,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 207-233 and pp. 290-317; William Underwood, 'Proof of POW forced labor for Japan's Foreign Minister: The Aso Mines', *Japan Focus*, 5, 5 (2007), https://apjjf.org/-William-Underwood/2432/article.html. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[7]POWRNJ Editors Committee, *Horyō shūyōjo, minkanjin yōryūsho jiten: Nihon kokunai-hen*, (Tokyo: Suirensha, 2023) (henceforth, POWRNJ *Jiten*). For other research in

While previous research provides a wartime history of POW camps in Japan, their role in post-war memory making is less clear. Some studies have explored them as the foci of transnational war commemoration or as legal cases, but these have been limited to a handful of individual camps.[8] It is thus unclear how commonly memorials were built at former POW camps, work, or grave sites in Japan's home islands, and whether patterns exist in the timing and reasons for their construction. Further, this lack of research impedes comparison between the memorialisation of Allied POWs in Japan and in countries of Japan's wartime empire. Through twelve key case studies, this paper seeks to address these gaps by revealing and examining the main factors that have shaped memorials to Allied POWs in Japan's home islands.

POW Camps in Japan

During the Second World War, the Japanese military imprisoned approximately 160,000 Allied servicemen, most of whom were captured in Singapore, the Philippines, and other parts of South East Asia.[9] Many were later transported throughout Asia on overcrowded ships and in very poor conditions to labour for the Japanese wartime empire.[10] Around 36,000 Allied POWs were imprisoned in Japan, where they were compelled to work in mines, factories, and shipyards. Up to 130 POW camps operated within Japan's home islands, where prisoners faced harsh confinement, severe labour conditions, insufficient food, and widespread illness. By the war's end, approximately 3,500 had died.[11] The dead POWs' remains were cremated, and their ashes were stored within the camps, nearby temples, or elsewhere. Immediately after the war,

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Japanese, see Komiya Mayumi, *Tekikokujin Yokuryū*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2009); Sasamoto Taeko, *Rengōgun Horyo no Bohimei*, (Tokyo: Kusanone Shuppankai, 2004); Tachikawa Kyōichi, '"Kyūgun ni okeru" horyo no toriatsukai: Taiheiyō sensō no jōkyō o chūshin ni', *Bōei Kenkyūjo Kiyō*, 10, 1 (2007), pp. 99-142; Utsumi Aiko, *Nihon-gun No Horyo Seisaku*, (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 2005).

[8]Palmer, 'Japan's World Heritage Miike Coal Mine'; Pieris, 'Intersectional sovereignty'.

[9]There is some disagreement about this figure. For example, Kovner quotes 140,000. *Prisoners of the Empire*, p. 5. Japan also captured an additional 160,000 'non-European' colonial servicemen that were either released, joined forces supporting Japan, or were used as labour after being classified by the Japan military as 'non-white.' POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 29, p. 102. See Kovner on the differing management of camps across Japan's empire and in its home islands. Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire*.

[10]On POW transportation and camps across the wartime empire, see Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire*.

[11]Approximately 11,000 additional POWs were killed during sea transportation to Japan. Either killed directly by Allied air and submarine forces sinking the ships, or as a result of their guards not saving the POWs from the sinking ships. POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 546.

Japan's POW Information Bureau (POWIB) issued a directive aimed at avoiding retribution by the incoming Allied occupation force. The POWIB instructed camp commanders to 'maintain prisoner burial grounds and repositories for deceased remains in an excellent state'.[12] Soon after the Japanese surrender in August 1945 Allied war graves registration units began collecting POW remains. While Commonwealth soldiers, including those from the UK, Australia, Canada, India, and New Zealand, found their resting place in what is now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Cemetery in Hodogaya Ward, Yokohama, the remains of American and Dutch soldiers were repatriated.[13]

After the war the Allies held hundreds of war crimes trials across the region. Japan's wartime leaders, including those charged with crimes against peace (Class A), went on trial in Tokyo between 1946 and 1948. More significant for POW-related cases, however, were the US Army's 1946 to 1949 Yokohama trials for conventional war crimes (Class B) and crimes against humanity (Class C). Of 1,037 people prosecuted, half were former POW camp personnel, and almost all other cases were also related to POW mistreatment. Fifty-one of those charged were executed.[14]

In areas within or controlled by the Japanese wartime empire, perhaps fifty to one hundred memorials to Allied POWs have emerged.[15] Within Japan, twenty-five memorials have been erected (Figure 1). Seventeen of these are near former camp, company, or work sites, three within Buddhist temple precincts, three in municipal or military cemeteries, and two elsewhere. Nine bear the names of the deceased. Most memorials feature inscriptions in Japanese or English, with some in both languages, and others also in Dutch, Chinese, or Korean.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Approximately fifty additional camps were established in Japan to intern enemy civilians living in Japan or its wartime empire. About 1,200 people were interned, of which 50 died. One memorial was built at a grave for civilian internees in Kanagawa. While they shared some experiences with POWs, such as harsh living conditions, they were generally not subjected to forced labour and were held in generally much smaller facilities, and thus deserve separate attention. POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 338.

[14]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, pp. 74-76.

[15]This is a rough estimate. The Kanchanaburi area of Thailand famous for the Thai-Burma Railway, has at least ten Allied POW-related memorials alone. Beaumont, 'The Thai-Burma Railway'. Other well-known memorials such as CWGC cemeteries can be found in Myanmar, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea.

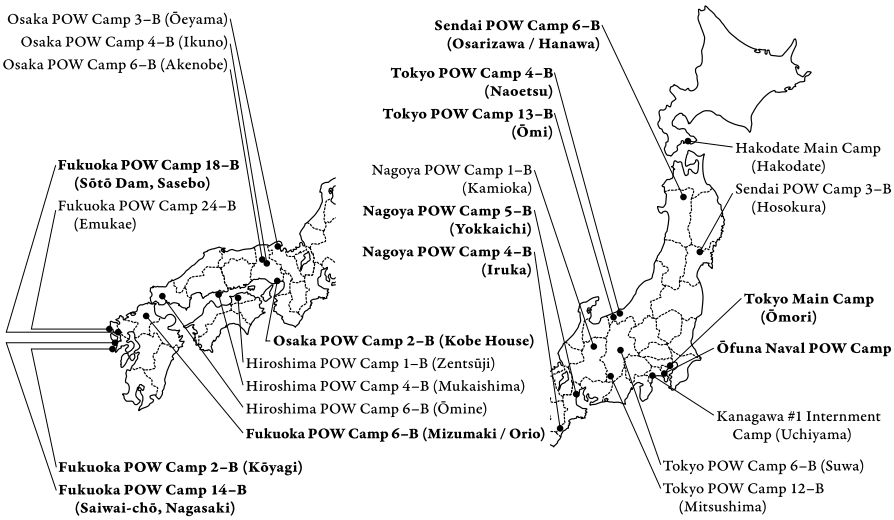

Figure 1: Map of 25 camps with memorials in Japan's home islands.[16] (Those marked as **Bold** appear in this article.)

This paper was written in tandem with POWRNJ's recently-completed encyclopaedia, the first detailed and comprehensive compilation of information on POW and civilian internee camps located in Japan's home islands.[17] Our study complements the encyclopaedia by exploring in greater depth how selected POW-related sites were memorialised after the war. Attention to these war memorials uncover layered, negotiated, and ongoing processes involving the efforts of multiple actors at varying scales (e.g., local, transnational, and international) to narrate the history of a site and war.[18] We attempt to disentangle these processes to highlight the following factors

[16]Courtesy of POWRNJ.

[17]POWRNJ, *Jiten*. In addition to online sites, such as those mentioned earlier, some books provide basic information on Japan's wartime camps. For example, Van Waterford, *Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 1994).

[18]In considering memorials as essentially markers of meaning tied to materiality and location, this paper draws on Laurajane Smith's concept of heritage. It also draws on the idea of dissonance, that heritage sites like the memorials discussed here contain multiple, often contrasting meanings for different stakeholders. Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* (London: Routledge, 2006); J. E. Tunbridge and G. J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*, (Chichester: John Wiley, 1996).

that are vital for understanding the memorialisation of POWs within Japan's home islands.

1. Involvement of Japanese individuals and civilian groups.
2. International and interlocal connections and reconciliation.
3. Tensions between memorialising Allied POWs and camp personnel.
4. Memorialisation of atomic bomb victims.
5. Memorialisation of Korean and Chinese wartime labourers.
6. Memorialisation by Japanese companies.

Of the twenty-five memorials for POWs in Japan, we analyse twelve key memorials that together demonstrate these factors (they are shown in Bold in Figure 1). Firstly, we explain the case studies under factors two to five, with certain cases appearing on multiple occasions. Secondly, in the discussion section we explore each factor in greater depth. As factor one, the involvement of Japanese individuals and organisations, is central to almost all case studies, it is left to this section. It should be noted that while each case study lists the year of construction of the first major memorial, these were often preceded by ceremonies or grave sites and followed by the construction of additional or replacement memorials. Thirdly, we clarify differences between POW memorials in Japan and in its wartime empire. Lastly, we close with a consideration of challenges facing the POW memorials in Japan today.

International and Interlocal Reconciliation

This section examines four case studies to illustrate how POW memorials in Japan have developed through international and interlocal connections, and in some cases became important points of reconciliation.

The *Sasebo POW Camp* (Nagasaki Prefecture, 1956 memorial) was established in October 1942. The Sasebo Camp held 265 American construction workers classified as POWs following their capture at Wake Island.[19] Here they worked to build the Soto Dam. Sasebo, a major Japanese Naval base during the war, was remilitarised when the US Navy established new bases following the outbreak of the Korean War. In 1956, Sasebo City erected a memorial to the deceased Japanese and Americans. Today, personnel from Sasebo's US Navy and Japan Maritime Self Defence Force bases participate together in an annual ceremony here for fifty-three POWs and fourteen Japanese labourers who died building the dam.[20] It is thus a site of US-Japan

[19]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 594.

[20]Jeremy Graham, 'Commander Fleet Activities Sasebo Soto Dam Memorial Ceremony 2022', *US Indo-Pacific Command*, 26 May 2022. https://www.pacom.mil/JTF-Micronesia/Article/3045901/commander-fleet-activities-sasebo-soto-dam-memorial-ceremony-2022/. Accessed 30 July 2024.

reconciliation that confirms their post-war military alliance and the local significance of this alliance to Sasebo. In addition, it illustrates how American military bases and personnel can become an additional pressure group in the creation of POW memorials in Japan.

The *Iruka POW Camp* (Mie Prefecture, 1959 memorial), was established in 1944 and housed 300 British POWs transferred from the Thai-Burma Railway. They worked at an Ishihara Sangyō mine. During internment, sixteen died.[21] Following the post-war POWIB directive, the mining company hastily constructed prisoner graves, however their remains were soon transferred to Yokohama's CWGC Cemetery. From the early 1950s, an association of town elders began caring for the grave site. CWGC officials visited the cemetery in 1959 and expressed their gratitude to the association with a commemorative plaque. In 1965, it was designated a local cultural heritage site named the 'Foreigner's Cemetery.' Markers were added in 1987 that recorded the cemetery's origin in Japanese and the names of the deceased British soldiers in English (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Memorial to British POWs at Iruka Camp.[22]

From 1988, Keiko Holmes, a resident of London who was from the area, began contacting family and former comrades of the POWs. Holmes later published *Little Britain*, a booklet of local and former POW recollections of the camp and grave site,

[21]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 337.
[22]Photo courtesy of Fukubayashi Toru.

the title of which is utilised in contemporary signposts.[23] Since 1992 her charitable organisation, Agape, has brought more than 400 former POWs and family members to Japan to visit the cemetery, and this led to reconciliation awards from Britain and Japan.

The *Mizumaki POW Camp* (Fukuoka Prefecture, 1987 memorial) was established in 1943 with nearly 1,200 POWs from this camp working in nearby coal mines. Seventy-four of whom died.[24] Following the 1945 POWIB directive, a POW burial site that became known as the 'Tower of the Cross' was built within the town's cemetery (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Memorial for Dutch POWs at Mizumaki.[25]

When a former Dutch POW, Adolf Winkler, revisited Mizumaki in 1985, he discovered the memorial had become overgrown by vegetation. Winkler soon returned with Dutch embassy staff and appealed to the town authorities for its reconstruction. Local residents volunteered and formed a citizen's association to assist

[23]Keiko Holmes, *Katasumi ni saku chiisana Eikoku: Eihei horyo to Nihonjin to no yūjō no kiroku*, (Self-published, 1992).
[24]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 559; Hayashi Eida, *Chikuhō Furyo-ki*, (Aki shobō, 1987).
[25]Photo courtesy of Fukubayashi Toru.

the project. In 1987, a plaque bearing the names of fifty-three dead Dutch POWs was installed, and a flower-laying ceremony was held for the Dutch POWs and their families. In 1989, another plaque was installed, listing the names of all 816 Dutch POWs that had died throughout Japan. From 1996, a program began that facilitated homestays between students from Mizumaki and Winkler's hometown. A visit to Mizumaki is part of the itinerary for former Dutch POWs, civilian internees, and family invited annually by the Japanese government. Mizumaki has thus become a cornerstone of Dutch-Japanese reconciliation and exchange.

The *Naoetsu POW Camp* (Niigata Prefecture, 1995 memorial) was established in 1942 and held around 700 POWs, including 300 Australians who were there the longest.[26] Sixty of the sixty-one POWs who died here were Australian. A bilateral relationship began in 1978, when an Australian ex-POW began corresponding with local educators. Years later, Ishizuka Shōichi and his wife Yōko began a movement to build a memorial for the POWs.[27] Yōko and other members made multiple visits to Australia, especially to Cowra, which became a centre of reconciliation through the memorialisation of the Japanese POWs and the Australian servicemen who died in the 1944 Cowra Breakout.[28] In cooperation with Japan-Australia associations from Cowra and Nara, they held their first memorial ceremony for the POWs in 1988. In 1995, they built a Peace Memorial Park at the site of the former camp with multiple symbols of bilateral reconciliation, including elevated statues with garlands of eucalyptus leaves and cherry blossoms (Figure 4).[29] They then established a local Japan-Australia Society. Joetsu City made a Peace and Friendship Agreement with Cowra in 2003, further deepening this bilateral and translocal relationship.

[26]Naoetsu POW Camp Peace and Friendship Statue Committee, *Taiheiyō ni kakeru hashi (A Bridge Across the Pacific Ocean)* (Joetsu Japan-Australia Association, 1996); POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 220.
[27]Ibid., pp. 21-22.
[28]For more on the Naoetsu-Cowra relationship, see Anoma Pieris, 'Empire of camps' and 'Intersectional sovereignty'. On Cowra, see Alison Starr, 'Forever Alongside: War Cemeteries as Sites of Enemy Reconciliation', *Japan Focus*, 20, 11, 3 (2022). https://apjjf.org/2022/10/Starr. Accessed 25 July 2024.
[29]Joetsu City and JASJ (Japan-Australia Society Joetsu), 'The Peace Memorial Park and Museum (visitor pamphlet)', p. 1. https://www.city.joetsu.niigata.jp/uploaded/attachment/108698.pdf. Accessed 15 December 2023.

Figure 4: "Peace and Friendship Statues" at the Naoetsu Peace Memorial Park.[30]

Tensions between Memorialising Allied POWs and Camp Personnel

The following section looks at four case studies to examine the significance of the war crimes trials and the post-war punishment of camp personnel in shaping these memorials.

The Yokkaichi POW Camp (Mie Prefecture, 1947 memorial) was established in 1944 and held approximately 600 POWs who were forced to work at the Ishihara Sangyō Yokkaichi Factory. Twenty of them died.[31] At the war crimes trials in early 1947 five camp personnel received jail sentences of between twenty-eight and two years. At the same time the company founder and president, Ishihara Hiroichirō, was held as a Class

[30]Photo courtesy of Willem Kortekaas of *Joetsu Stories*, https://joetsu-stories.jp/2022/01/31/the-peace-memorial-park-naoetsu/. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[31]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 341.

A war criminal on suspicion of financing the invasion of Manchuria, but was released in 1948. Following the trial of the camp personnel, the camp interpreter Seta Einosuke, with the cooperation of the factory and his colleagues, built a cemetery, and held a memorial ceremony for the dead POWs. Seta later wrote of coming up with the idea 'after the war crime survey had somewhat settled.'[32] The ceremony was attended by former POWs, US military personnel, and factory workers.[33] Seta, who fostered friendships with some of the POWs, seems to have been motivated to memorialise the POWs out of pity. However, the cemetery's establishment with company support and the attendance of US military personnel indicates that it was also partly an effort of reconciliation with the then occupying power, America. The company may have supported the memorial to show remorse and gain clemency for their president. The original cemetery was destroyed by a typhoon in 1959 and a new memorial was subsequently established at its current location in the Ishihara factory complex. The inscription appears recent, perhaps from when American ex-POWs visited in the 2000s.[34] Its English and Japanese inscriptions dedicate it to 'those who fought and died bravely in the name of peace and freedom during World War II.' An accompanying Japanese sign incongruously describes the monument as marking graves of 'Occupying force soldiers' who died during the war. This avoidance of the term 'POW' in Japanese and English likely illustrates the trepidation surrounding the open memorialisation of POWs in Japan.

The *Ōfuna POW Camp* (Kanagawa Prefecture, approx. 1950 memorial) was established in 1942. This was a secret facility built by the Navy to gather information from prisoners.[35] Around 1,000 POWs were interrogated here, 6 of whom died and were buried in the cemetery of a neighbouring temple. Thirty camp personnel were tried as war criminals; two received life sentences and the remainder decades-long jail sentences. In 1950, and after returning from the war as a soldier, the temple's head priest erected a *sotoba* Buddhist tablet for the dead POWs and began conducting memorial services.[36] Decades later, in 2004, the POWRNJ proposed the installation of a lasting and prominent stone memorial to replace the tablet, which is wooden and located poorly on a cliff face (Figure 5).[37] Though this plan was supported by the new head priest and by some parishioners, it failed after opposition from other parishioners, who argued that camp personnel were victims of an 'unjust retaliatory

[32] Shimizu Masaaki, *Senjou no Fantasutikku Shinfonii: Jindou Sakka Seta Einosuke no Hansei*, (Nagoya: Ningensha, 2017), p. 170.
[33] Ibid. Given that most POWs had repatriated by late September 1945, these former POWs were likely part of the Occupation force or providing war trial evidence.
[34] POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 342.
[35] Sasamoto, *Rengōgun*.
[36] Ibid., p. 202.
[37] Based on communication with priest, 2004.

trial' and that it was 'outrageous' to build a memorial to the POWs.[38] Possibly their hostility was because the camp head and one other of the camp personnel had been temple parishioners. The priest, who had been assigned to the temple from outside the district, had little power to counter their opposition. Rather than make a public monument, however, he installed a mortuary tablet for the dead POWs which is out of sight of the parishioners, and to which he regularly prays (Figure 6).[39]

Figure 5 (left): *Sotoba* tablet for dead POWs from Ōfuna.
Figure 6 (right): Buddhist mortuary tablets for dead POWs from Ōfuna (in left of photo) and for Japanese soldiers who died abroad (on right) with flowers.[40]

The *Ōmori POW Camp* (Tokyo, 1960 memorial) was relocated here from another part of Tokyo (Shinagawa) in 1943 and served as a regional Tokyo headquarters. It was

[38]Ibid.
[39]Based on conversation with priest, November 2013.
[40]Photos by authors.

built on a reclaimed island in Tokyo Bay.[41] After the war, it was converted into the Ōmori Prison and held Japan's wartime leaders and camp personnel accused of prisoner abuse before their transfer to Sugamo Prison in November 1945. Later, it was replaced by a motorboat racing course, turning the area into the 'Peace Island' ('*Heiwa-jima*') leisure destination. The memorial (Figure 7) is a likeness of Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, called the 'Peace Kannon Statue' and was built in 1960 near the entrance to the motorboat course.[42]

Figure 7: "Peace Kannon Statue" at the former Ōmori Camp.[43]

It was partly funded by the motorboat course company and by Sasagawa Ryōichi, who was chairman of the Japan Motorboat Promotion Association and had been held in

[41]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 193.
[42]On Kannon and war dead memorialization in Japan, see Daniel Milne and David Moreton, 'Remembering and forgetting the war dead at Ryōzen Kannon: A site of entangled and transnational war memories,' *Japan Focus*, 20, 11, 2 (2022). https://apjjf.org/2022/11/Milne-Moreton.html
[43]Photo by authors.

Ōmori Prison as a suspected war criminal. An accompanying panel in Japanese reads: 'Peace Island is a place where during the last war there was an enemy POW camp, and after the war, our country's war criminals endured days of hardship…' Though the statue may appear to honour POWs, therefore, it is primarily a monument to the ordeals of suspected war criminals.

The *Naoetsu POW Camp* discussed earlier is not only indicative of POW camps as hubs of reconciliation but also of the tension between memorialising POWs and the post-war execution of camp staff as war criminals. Eight Naoetsu camp personnel received death sentences, the highest number for any camp in Japan. As a result, the town's POW history became a sensitive subject. This could be observed even half a century later when, opposing the movement to memorialize the camp's history, some locals argued to 'let sleeping dogs lie'.[44] Along with the statues of Japan-Australian reconciliation in the Peace Park is a memorial to executed camp personnel. This was added at a relatively late stage of planning following complaints and subsequent meetings with families of the executed staff. The Peace Park's leaders came to the conclusion that the camp personnel were victims of the Japanese military that had failed to educate them on prisoner treatment. Plans for this new monument sparked opposition from ex-POWs. However, Peace Park heads explained that it aimed not to glorify war criminals but to console their families, who had faced bullying and discrimination because of their relationship to a war criminal.[45] While opposition among former POWs remained, this explanation persuaded representatives of the Australian POWs to support the Peace Park. One such ex-POW, Jack Mudie, joined the opening ceremony where he formally shook hands with family members of executed camp personnel.[46] Naoetsu, therefore, has not only been a site of reconciliation between Japan and Australia but also, though with mixed success, between former POWs and the ancestors of their former captors.

Memorialisation of Atomic Bomb Victims and Korean and Chinese Wartime Laborers

Next are four memorials that illustrate entanglements between the memorialization of POWs and wider issues of forced labour and atomic bomb victimization.

The Kobe Port Peace Monument (Hyogo Prefecture, 2008) pays tribute to Allied POWs alongside Koreans and Chinese forcibly brought to work in the warehouses

[44]Naoetsu POW, *Taiheiyō*, p. 34.
[45]Naoetsu POW, *Taiheiyō*, p. 35.
[46]Ibid., pp. 36-37.

and factories of the Kobe Port area.[47] The monument was built in July 2008 after a decade of study by an association of primarily locally-based, Japanese-born researchers of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese descent.[48] It is engraved in their three languages and English, and stands in front of the Kobe Overseas Chinese History Museum, which is 800 meters from the former POW camp site. The association initially planned to memorialise Koreans and Chinese but expanded their scope after finding that POWs had also been exploited at Kobe. The association organises an annual Kobe Port Peace Gathering where they meet and study the forced labour regime and the imperial and wartime history of Japan.[49] It is likely this is the only example in Japan of a monument that together commemorates Allied POWs and Korean, and Chinese victims of wartime Japan's forced labour regime.

Likewise, there is a memorial for British POWs and Korean forced labourers from the *Iruka POW* discussed earlier. In the late 2000s, a Japanese-based association researching the Ishihara Sangyō mine's history found evidence that the Iruka camp had housed hundreds of Korean labourers before the POWs arrived, and that the remains of thirty-five had been buried meters from the British POW grave site.[50] In 2008, the association requested that Kumano City and Ishihara Sangyō help fund a new memorial to the Koreans, but this request was declined. In 2010 the association then purchased land and built their own monument not far from the grave site.[51] The two monuments at Iruka illustrate the shared histories of Allied POWs and Korean forced labourers and also suggests their unequal treatment in post-war Japan.

The *Kōyagi* & *Saiwai-chō POW Camps* (Nagasaki Prefecture, 2015 and 2021 memorials) were established in 1942 and 1943. Located on the outskirts of Nagasaki, the Kōyagi

[47]Kōbe-kō ni okeru senshi-ka Chōsenjin, Chūgokujin kyōseirengō o chōsa suru kai (eds.), *Kōbe-kō Kyōseirengō no Kiroku: Chōsenjin, Chūgokujin soshite Rengōgun Horyo* (Akashi shoten, 2004).

[48]Hida Yūichi, '"Kōbe kō heiwa no hi" ga kansei shimashita', *Mukuge tsūshin* 229 (27 July 2008), pp. 7-8. https://ksyc.jp/mukuge/229/hida.pdf. Accessed 20 December 2023.

[49]Association Investigating the Forced Mobilization of Koreans and Chinese in Wartime Kobe Port, 'Kōbe-kō heiwa no ishibumi no tsudoi 2023', 25 April 2023. https://ksyc.jp/kobeport/. Accessed 20 December 2023.

[50]Yonhap News, 'Chōsenjin giseisha tsuitōhi secchi no Nihon dantai', 25 February 2015. https://jp.yna.co.kr/view/AJP20150225003400882 Accessed 30 August 2024; Sasamoto Taeko, 'Iruka horyoshūyōjo to "shiseki gaijinbochi" 2, 3'. https://blog.goo.ne.jp/kisyuhankukhainan/e/7900bb7f1faac3b8c72e148b6f90c981. Accessed 20 December 2023.
Remains have been unearthed but not yet reliably identified.

[51]Yonhap News, 'Chōsenjin'.

Camp once held around 1,500 POWs who worked at a shipyard, seventy-two of whom died.[52] Komatsu Akira, a local taxi driver, conceived of the idea for a POW memorial after guiding ex-POWs to the former camp site. He discussed this with Ihara Toyokazu, a City Assembly member and leader of a *hibakusha* (atomic bomb survivor) group. Ihara spearheaded the campaign and with other *hibakusha* built the memorial with a conviction that, 'While Nagasaki citizens often focus on the effects of the atomic bomb, to empower the *hibakusha* movement we must also acknowledge the history of perpetration that took place right here.'[53] In 2015, a memorial inscribed with the names of the deceased POWs in Japanese, English, and Dutch was erected near the former camp site. Following POW family requests to commemorate both the survivors and the deceased, the inscription reads, 'In memory of those who lived in such harsh circumstances, to which some of them succumbed.' Subsequently, Andre Schram, the son of a Dutch former POW, and Yukari Tangena, a Japanese member of a Dutch reconciliation organisation, installed a QR code that provides further information of the camp's history. In 2021, the same *hibakusha* association and their descendants joined with Rob Schouten, the son of a Dutch POW who survived the atomic bomb, to build another memorial. This stands adjacent to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and is for another POW camp in Nagasaki, Saiwai-chō.[54] More than 100 POWs died at this camp before it was destroyed in Nagasaki's atomic bombing which killed eight more. Together, these memorials demonstrate intersections in Allied POW and *hibakusha* histories.

Memorialisation by Japanese Companies

The two case studies below, along with the Yokkaichi memorial described earlier, demonstrate the role of companies in the construction of POW memorials for the POW labourers they had exploited during the war.

The *Ōmi POW Camp* (Niigata Prefecture, 2014 memorial), established in 1943, held approximately 600 British and American POWs that worked at the Denki Kagaku (DK) Ōmi Factory.[55] Relatives of a British POW, Linda and Kevin Nicholas, gained the assistance of the British Embassy and worked with DK to erect a memorial in 2014 to sixty dead POWs. DK covered the construction costs, a commendable act, however the monument's inscription is only in English. Taeko Sasamoto of POWRNJ wrote to the company in November 2014 requesting the addition of a Japanese inscription and

[52]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, pp. 538-9. Also, Broderick and Palmer, 'Australian, British, Dutch and US POWs'.
[53]POWRNJ (ed.), *Fukuoka Horyo Shūyōjo Dai 2 Bunsho Tsuito Hi Hōkokushu* (2016).
[54]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 580.
[55]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, pp. 268-9.

its inclusion on maps.[56] DK declined and explained in a letter that, 'This memorial was erected for POWs and their families, not for viewing by Japanese people.' DK's purpose in installing the memorial was thus not to inform the Japanese about issues of wartime labour exploitation, POW treatment, or the company's wartime history. DK is a large company and would have been concerned with its domestic reputation. Further, given that it has offices in the UK and US, the construction of the memorial specifically for POWs and their families may have been inspired by a wish specifically to protect its reputation in Britain and America. In 2000 Britain decided to compensate former British POWs and forced labourers following a long campaign by British ex-servicemen's associations.[57] DK's support for the memorial was therefore likely not an attempt to avoid litigation. However, the fact that the British government paid compensation in 2000 (as had Japan following the 1951 San Francisco peace treaty), may have reassured DK that their support for the memorial would not be followed by reparation demands. The Ōmi memorial indicates both the potential and – as seen in the refusal to address a Japanese audience – the limitations of memorials constructed by companies that exploited POW labour.

The *Osarizawa Camp,* (Akita Prefecture, 2016 memorial), established in 1944 at the Osarizawa Mine is one of four similar monuments to POWs built in 2016 by Mitsubishi Materials.[58] Twenty-seven died at these mines, eight at Osarizawa and nineteen at Hosokura. Titled, 'In Memory of WWII POWs', the plaque at Osarizawa (Figure 8) recognizes that POWs 'were forced to work' at this and other Mitsubishi mines, that eight died here, and that working conditions 'were exceedingly harsh and left deep mental and physical wounds'. It expresses Mitsubishi's 'remorse' and finishes by offering 'its heartfelt apologies to all former POWs who were forced to work under appalling conditions in the mines' and 'its unswerving resolve to contribute to the creation of a world in which fundamental human rights and justice are fully guaranteed.'

These four apologetic memorials were a ground-breaking step for companies that used forced POW labour. They became possible thanks to activism by the families of American POWs, a Japanese researcher, and a US-based human rights organisation. The memorials followed a formal apology that was made in America by Mitsubishi to former American POWs for their wartime treatment. There was also a donation of

[56]This and the following quotation are from correspondence with Sasamoto Taeko, 12 October 2023.
[57]Richard Norton-Taylor, '£10,000 payout to Japan POWs', *The Guardian*, 8 November 2000. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/nov/08/richardnortontaylor. Accessed 20 December 2023.
[58]POWRNJ, *Jiten*, p. 162; POWRNJ, 'Mitsubishi Camp Memorial', http://powresearch.jp/news/?p=720. Accessed 6 November 2023. On Mitsubishi Mining and POWs, see Palmer, 'Japan's World Heritage Miike Coal Mine'.

US$50,000 to an American POW museum.[59] While the memorials are bilingual, Mitsubishi has not taken a proactive stance in promoting them to the Japanese public. The memorial and Mitsubishi apology followed nearly two decades of petitioning to allow former POWs to sue Mitsubishi and other Japanese companies in American courts.[60] Mitsubishi's primary goal, therefore, may have been to appease the former POWs and their families as a means of protecting the company's international reputation and of avoiding lawsuits.

Figure 8: Information plaque at Osarizawa Mine.[61]

[59]Nash Jenkins, 'Mitsubishi Apologizes for Using US Prisoners as Slaves During World War II', *Time*, 19 July 2015. https://time.com/3963900/mitsubishi-apologizes-world-war-ii-slaves/. Accessed 25 July 2024; Jan Thompson, 'Statement for the Record to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee', ADBC Memorial Society. https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110539/documents/HMTG-116-VR00-20200303-SD022.pdf. Accessed 12 January 2024.

[60]Kinue Tokudome, 'POW Forced-Labor Lawsuits: Four Years Later', *Center for Research Allied POWs Under the Japanese* (translated from *Ronza*), September 2003. http://mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/fukuoka/fuk_01_fukuoka/fukuoka_01/Lawsuits.htm. Accessed 15 December 2023.

[61]Photo by authors.

Discussion

Involvement of Japanese Individuals and Civilian Groups

As many of the memorials discussed above illustrate, Japanese individuals and civilian groups have been central to the construction of memorials for POWs in Japan. Memorials built in the first post-war decade were primarily led by Japanese individuals. Though the company's support of the Yokkaichi memorial suggests its construction was related to the war crimes trials, it was planned independently by camp interpreter Seta Einosuke, who felt sorry for the POWs he had befriended.[62] Another early memorial, that at Ōfuna, was erected by a monk from a neighbouring temple. The memorial plaque for the Iruka camp cemetery, built in 1959 to thank a local association for years of memorial ceremonies and gravesite care, was also a product of local activism. People who, like Seta, interacted with the POWs during the war remained important decades later. In the early 1990s, locals who had been mobilised as school students to work at the Iruka mine held a memorial service for the dead POWs, and then began working with Holmes in her activities mentioned earlier of welcoming visits by former POWs and their families.[63] As part of the construction of the Naoetsu Peace Park in 1995, a stone cenotaph was installed at a nearby temple, Kakushin-ji. This is etched in Japanese with, 'There are neither enemies or allies among the dead.'[64] The temple's priest, Fujito Enri, is said to have used this phrase when he accepted the cremated remains of the Naoetsu Camp dead. The same remains had been refused elsewhere because they were seen to be the remains of Japan's enemy.

The initial post-war period of activism was followed by relative inactivity, likely because of growing opposition to POW memorialisation after the war crime trials and the occupation of Japan by the Allied powers. From the 1980s, a second generation of civilian actors emerged who had not learned of their local POW history directly. Rather, they discovered it through pre-existing memorials, research, or contact with former POWs and their families, who increasingly travelled to Japan and often collaborated with local activists. Holmes was inspired to begin her reconciliation activities by a monument in her hometown. Activists in Naoetsu gained motivation to build monuments from researching their local history and interacting with former Australian POWs and their families. One of their leaders, Ishizuka Shōichi, a post-war prisoner of the Allies, spoke of his own POW experience as 'like paradise' and was stunned to learn of the contrast to the experience of Allied POWs at Naoetsu.[65] These

[62]Shimizu, *Senjō no Fantasutikku Shinfonii*.

[63]Holmes, *Katasumi*.

[64]Joetsu City and JASJ, 'The Peace Memorial Park', p. 4.

[65]From communication with Ishizuka by author, 20 December 2023. Zentsūji Camp (Kagawa Prefecture) is another example of a memorial built by a former Japanese POW. Nagura Yūichi (ed.), *Taiheiyō Sensō hatsu no horyo shūyōjo Zenkōji no kiroku*, (Self-published, 2012).

leaders engaged other local citizens, who provided most of the funding for the Naoetsu Peace Park.[66] Likewise, the Kobe memorial for forced labourers, and Nagasaki's Kōyagi and Saiwai-chō memorials were constructed by locally-based research and activist associations in cooperation with the relatives of former POWs. Today, many Japanese activists continue to collaborate with POW groups and educate new generations of Japanese about local POW history by guiding student groups to these memorials. As opposition by temple parishioners in Ōfuna demonstrates, however, local sentiment has also hindered the construction of public monuments to Allied POWs.

Memorialising Allied POWs and Camp Personnel

Opposition to the memorialisation of Allied POWs due to sympathy for punished camp personnel has not dissipated greatly with time. The Yokkaichi cemetery, which gained factory support in 1947 despite the punishment of camp personnel, suggests that this tension has not always been so fraught. Importantly, it was built in 1947 during the Allied Occupation period, when the war trials were relatively popular – or at least accepted as inevitable – and criticism was also censored.[67] In addition, the Yokkaichi camp personnel were not executed, reducing the likelihood of resentment there. Internal company factors, specifically support for the cemetery to forge relations with America or gain clemency for its president, may have also been at work.

After the war crimes trials, it became increasingly difficult for Japanese to discuss local POW history. The camps became symbols of a defeat that many wished to forget. Opposition to the war crimes trials gradually increased after Occupation censorship ended.[68] Many felt that subordinates, such as POW camp guards, should not have been executed as they were following orders. Sympathy grew also for the executed leaders. In 1960, a mausoleum was built in Aichi Prefecture to hold the ashes of seven 'martyred' leaders.[69] Their supporters argued that the executed men had been honourable martyrs who fought a defensive (not aggressive) war and whose death helped enable Japan's post-war prosperity.[70] They were further glorified when, in 1978, the remains of Class A and other war criminals were enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine. Criticism of the trials became increasingly widespread due to 1980s media coverage

[66]Naoetsu POW, *Taiheiyō*.

[67]Madoka Futamura, 'Japanese Societal Attitudes Towards the Tokyo Trial: A Contemporary Perspective,' *Japan Focus* 9, 29, 5 (2011); James Orr, *The Victim As Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2001), p. 20.

[68]Orr, *The Victim As Hero*, p. 20-24.

[69]Junkoku shichinin hōsankai, 'Junkoku shichinin no eirei ni sasagu.' http://ki43.on.coocan.jp/junkoku/7.06.html. Accessed 28 March 2024.

[70]Futamura, 'Japanese Societal Attitudes Towards the Tokyo Trial'.

and the mainstreaming of revisionist views of the war from the 1990s.[71] Meanwhile, the POW wartime experience was so traumatic, and for some so shameful, that many ex-POWs felt unable or unwilling to share it.[72] Many were also focused on adjusting to non-military life and had no time or interest to travel to Japan. Further, those who sought additional compensation from Japan or its companies lacked their own governments' support. Amidst the Cold War, most of their governments prioritised amity over confrontation with Japan, and argued that the post-war peace treaties had extinguished the POWs' claims for compensation.[73] Thus, while in Japan sympathy for the executed and contempt for the charges of POW abuse grew, former POWs had little voice in Japan or at home.

These shifts are evident at the 1960 Ōmori memorial, which briefly mentioned the POWs but primarily memorialised the 'days of hardship' of war criminals. At Naoetsu, pressure from former POWs on the one hand and people sympathetic to the executed camp personnel on the other threatened memorialisation efforts. This was only reconciled by the creation of two memorials and reassurances that the memorial to the executed aimed not to glorify but to console their family members. However, opposition from parishioners sympathetic to executed camp staff spoiled plans for a new public monument in Ōfuna in the 2000s. Despite this, the temple's head priest installed a private mortuary tablet for the POWs. As these cases indicate, rather than dissipating with the passing of the war generation, local connections to executed camp personnel, historical revisionism, and politicians with vested interests have kept opposition to the memorialisation of POWs alive.[74]

International and Interlocal Reconciliation

A third factor behind POW memorialisation in Japan has been international connections. Iruka, Mizumaki, Naoetsu, and Sasebo, in particular, have become important nodes of exchange and reconciliation between Japan and the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, and America respectively. The first three have been led by locals, and former POWs and their family members, and have been facilitated by intergovernmental organizations such as the CWGC and local and national governments. A shift from the 1980s, after which more than half of the memorials

[71]Futamura, 'Japanese Societal Attitudes Towards the Tokyo Trial'.

[72]On post-war experiences of former POWs of Japan from America, Australia, Britain, India, and the Netherlands, see chapters in Kevin Blackburn and Karl Hack, *Forgotten Captives in Japanese Occupied Asia*.

[73]P. Scott Corbett, 'In the Eye of a Hurricane: Americans in Japanese Custody During World War II', in Blackburn and Hack, *Forgotten Captives in Japanese Occupied Asia*, p. 121.

[74]On Asō Tarō and Asō Mining's use of POW labour, see Underwood, 'Proof of POW forced labor'.

were constructed, demonstrates how former POWs and their relatives began to contact and visit former camp sites. This likely reflected changes in how former POWs were perceived at home and the fact that many former POWs had reached retirement age.[75] These visitors inspired a new generation of locals to learn about and build memorials, which helped foster reconciliation through memorial ceremonies, tour visits, and exchange programs. The Sasebo memorial, meanwhile, was initiated not by citizens and POWs but by the city in response to the presence of a US Naval base.

As Mizumaki, Naoetsu, and Sasebo demonstrate, former POW camp sites also became points of translocal reconciliation and networking. Mizumaki and Winkler's hometown have maintained a student exchange program for over twenty-seven years. Representatives from Cowra, Australia, helped conduct the first ceremonies for POWs at Naoetsu. Further, Cowra provided Naoetsu with a model for memorialising former enemy POWs alongside the local dead. Lastly, the Sasebo memorial has helped strengthen bonds between the local government and the Sasebo-based Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and US Navy, demonstrating that memorials to POWs and the Japanese who died working beside them can foster local and international connections.

The Atomic Bombs and Forced Labour Memorialisation

A fourth factor in the memorialisation of POWs in Japan, especially over the last two decades, has been the linking of Allied POWs to atomic bomb victimhood and to the forced labour of Koreans and Chinese. The Nagasaki memorials aim to widen local knowledge of war victimhood while simultaneously forging links between Allied POWs and *hibakusha*, both of whom were victims (or survivors) of Nagasaki's atomic bombing. Likewise, founders of the Kobe memorial wanted to recognise the common suffering of Koreans, Chinese, and Allied POWs forced to work at the port. The construction of a memorial in 2010 to Koreans who died at Iruka also points to such shared pasts, although the lack of municipal and company support suggests that hostility toward memorials for Koreans even exceeds that toward those for POWs.[76] These cases demonstrate that the memorialisation of POWs in Japan should not be

[75]POWs of Japan came to be seen in a more positive light, even as heroes, from the 1980s in Australia and the 1990s in the UK. While the Asian front is marginal in Dutch memory of the war, partly due to its contentious history of colonialism in Indonesia, Dutch POWs of Japan gained increasing recognition from the 1990s. Indian and Canadian POWs of Japan, meanwhile, remain peripheral to national war memory. Blackburn and Hack, *Forgotten Captives.*

[76]On the recent banning of memorials to Korean wartime laborers, see Sven Saaler, 'Demolition Men: The Unmaking of a Memorial Commemorating Wartime Forced Laborers in Gunma (Japan)', *Japan Focus*, 20, 16, 14 (2022). https://apjjf.org/2022/16/saaler

analysed in isolation, but in connection to *hibakusha*, forced labour, imperialism, and Japan's international relations.

Company Memorialisation

Companies have long been connected to the memorialisation of POWs in Japan. Seta gained the cooperation of his factory to build a Yokkaichi cemetery in 1947, although perhaps because the company president was a war crime suspect. A motorboat racing association supported Ōmori's Kannon statue as part of the association's efforts to transform the site from a former POW camp and post-war prison into a place of 'peace' and leisure. However, companies that exploited POWs only became actively involved in the memorialisation of POWs from the 2010s onwards in response to the combined pressure of former POWs and Japanese and international activists. It is likely that the memorials for the Ōmi camp and Mitsubishi mines were also motivated by concern for those company's international reputations, especially in the vital markets of America and Britain. Furthermore, the Mitsubishi memorials were partly a reaction to possible American lawsuits, and it is plausible that the Ōmi memorial was built in the knowledge that claims of compensation were unlikely to follow. Lastly, as these companies have not engaged well with domestic audiences, their memorials have not become points of reconciliation and exchange between locals and former POWs and their families, and so contribute little to Japanese understanding of the history and lessons of forced labour and the war. It should be noted, however, that their efforts to engage with former POWs and their families far outstrip those of other companies that exploited wartime labour and thus deserve some praise.

POW Memorialisation in the Wartime Empire

In order to assess how distinct the above factors are to Allied POW memorials in Japan's home islands, we will lastly discuss their relevance to memorials in Japan's short-lived wartime empire. Firstly, Japanese activism has been limited beyond its national borders. While Japanese residents in Singapore, Malaysia, and other parts of the former wartime empire have been central to maintaining memorials for Japanese soldiers, which may strengthen their sense of ethnic identity and local connection, they have been largely uninvolved in the post-war construction of memorials for Allied POWs.[77] This is partly because, like Camp O'Donnell in the Philippines, many

[77]Kevin Blackburn, 'Heritage site, war memorial and tourist stop: The Japanese cemetery of Singapore, 1891-2005', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 80, 1 (2007), pp. 17-39; Collin Rusneac, 'Building transnational memories at Japanese war and colonial cemeteries', *Japan Focus*, 20, 11, 2 (2022). https://apjjf.org/2022/10/rusneac. Accessed 26 July 2024. As Arnel Joven's paper on Camp O'Donnell illustrates, some memorials to Allied POWs in the empire were built or facilitated by Japanese camp personnel during the war. Arnel Joven, 'Remembering

memorials developed into symbols of bilateral friendship based on shared suffering at the hands of – and victory over – Japan.[78] Expatriate Japanese may therefore be deliberately excluded or feel demonised. As the range of Japanese-founded memorials near the Thai-Burma Railway attest, however, Japanese reconciliation activists and organisations have played a role in regions where memorials have not become a site of shared enmity.[79]

Secondly, memorials for Allied POWs in Japan's wartime empire have not been shaped through tension caused by the war crimes trials but rather with local colonial and wartime histories. War memorials in Singapore, for example, have been primarily products of activism by local war victims, international relations, and the imperatives of unifying a heterogeneous, post-colonial nation.[80] Attempts by a Canadian to build memorials for Allied POWs in Taiwan initially lacked support because local Taiwanese were unsure whether they should be seen as the perpetrators of wartime abuse or as victims.[81]

Thirdly, like memorials in Japan, those for Allied POWs in the wartime empire are invariably sites of international détente or friendship. For example, memorials associated with Changi Prison in Singapore and the Hellfire Pass in Thailand, two of the most significant sites in Australian POW memorialisation, have been shaped through visits by former POWs, diplomatic pressure, and bilateral gestures of goodwill.[82]

Fourthly, while other victims of forced labour have been linked to POWs at memorials in the wartime empire, the relative absence of local *hibakusha* means that atomic-bomb memorialisation has not. At memorials on the Thai-Burma Railway, the forced labour

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Camp O'Donnell: From shared memories to public history in the Philippines', *Japan Focus*, 20, 11, 2 (2022). https://apjjf.org/2022/11/joven. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[78]Joven, 'Remembering Camp O'Donnell'.

[79]Beaumont, 'The Thai-Burma Railway'. The relative inclusiveness of memorials in Thailand is likely because Thailand was a (coerced) wartime ally of Japan and, while briefly invaded by Japan, did not suffer to the extent of countries like the Philippines or Singapore. See the paper in this issue by Nipaporn Ratchatapattanakul for more.

[80]Kevin Blackburn, 'The collective memory of the Sook Ching Massacre and the creation of the civilian war memorial of Singapore', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 73, 2 (279) (2000), pp. 71-90.

[81]Shu-Mei Huang and Hyun-Kyung Lee, *Heritage, Memory, and Punishment: Remembering Colonial Prisons in East Asia*, (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 104.

[82]Joan Beaumont, 'Contested trans-national heritage: The demolition of Changi Prison, Singapore', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 15, 4 (2009), pp. 298-316; Beaumont, 'The Thai-Burma Railway'.

of Asians, who made up the majority of the workforce, is often highlighted, though the Hellfire Pass Museum emphasises the suffering of Australian POWs. These memorials also fail to highlight the role of Koreans and Taiwanese as POW camp personnel.[83] Japan's wartime leadership is typically positioned as the cause of POW suffering and, as the attempt to build a memorial to Allied POWs in Taiwan attests, due to controversial questions about whether Koreans and Taiwanese were coerced into war involvement – or did so freely.[84]

Lastly, companies that exploited POW labour during the war have been relatively uninvolved in memorials to POWs in Japan's wartime empire. While they maintained ownership or connection to many of the factories and workplaces within Japan where POWs worked during the war, such connections were cut with Japan's defeat and the loss of that empire. As the example of Mitsubishi's support for an American POW museum, and the involvement of the Thai-Japanese Chamber of Commerce in memorial ceremonies near the Thai-Burma Railway attests, however, their support for POW-related memorials outside Japan is possible.[85]

Conclusion

Many memorials for POWs in Japan embody the suffering of former prisoners, family, and loved ones, as well as the sympathies of local Japanese. For former POWs, these have been places where they can pay their respects to their fallen comrades, engage with sympathetic Japanese, and achieve a degree of emotional closure. For families and relatives, they are a place to foster a deeper comprehension of their relative's experiences. Moreover, they play a role in transmitting historical narratives of the camps to subsequent generations of visitors. They also offer Japanese the opportunity to explore the veiled depths of their local history, including links to other victims and legacies of the war, and may inspire support for reconciliation efforts. However, controversies about the justice of the war crimes trials, as well as about how liable companies are that exploited POWs, and Koreans and Chinese, are likely to continue shaping such memorials and memorial practices in the future.

Numerous challenges face the educational role and physical upkeep of these memorials today.[86] Many lack multilingual signage or guides who can provide insight beyond monument inscriptions, and many of the guides are aging volunteers. The development of QR codes and similar technologies to enable visitors to independently access

[83]On Koreans and Taiwanese as POW camp guards and on POW camps in Korea, see Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire,* p. 105, pp. 120-136.
[84]Huang and Lee, *Heritage, Memory, and Punishment*, p. 104.
[85]Beaumont, 'The Thai-Burma Railway', p. 109.
[86]Much of this paragraph is based on communication with Sasamoto Taeko, POWRNJ. 9 November 2023.

reliable information can partly address this. Additionally, while civic groups are central to monument maintenance and management, these groups are also aging, raising questions about who will take responsibility for upkeep and funding. New generations of activists are needed, as are links between government and civil organisations. Lastly, even in locations where there are no markers, former POWs and relatives still visit. Many contact the POWRNJ about the former camps, memorials, and guides. But because of financial and time constraints, however, they are sometimes unable to help. Educational boards, historical and archival societies, and other regional institutions may be able to help fill this gap. As this paper attests, memorials to POW camps in Japan have a long history and continue to evolve as points of reconciliation, international connection, and an awareness of history. Efforts should be made to assure that they continue to serve this important purpose into the future.