

**Barefoot Benefactors:
A Study of Japanese Views of Melanesians**

Hisafumi Saito

This paper discusses the experiences of Japanese soldiers in Melanesia with special reference to their relationship with and their views of Melanesians. Contrary to my original expectations, Japanese were very interested in Melanesians. This is reflected in the considerable number of documents I have collected that refer to Melanesians during the war. In this paper I draw from twenty-three of those documents. These materials are listed in chronological order in appendix A. Each particular source in the list is then designated by letters from *a* to *w* in the tables in appendix B.

Inhabitants Referred to by Materials

Records pertaining to the people living in the Wewak area of Papua New Guinea, including Kairiru and Mushu islands off Wewak, Prince Alexander Range, and the basin of the middle and lower Sepik River, are the most abundant (Table 1). This is because many Japanese, after failing to attack Aitape in July 1944, survived the war by depending on food supplied by villagers, mainly in the southern slopes of the Prince Alexander Range. Though Japanese troops survived the war in Rabaul (at the eastern tip of New Britain) and in Bougainville (in the northern Solomons chain), only five sources refer to the people in and around Rabaul, and just four to those in the Solomon Islands. There do not seem to be as many Japanese who had close contact with inhabitants in both of those areas. In Rabaul the Japanese had established a "self-supporting system," which made it possible for them to survive without commandeering villagers' harvests. In Bougainville, Japanese could find few friendly inhabitants (except on Buka), largely because of the successful campaigns by the Allied forces.

Terms Referring to Melanesians

Although village names often appear in the materials the proper names of ethnic groups are never referred to. Tanaka (1975), who records the names of some ethnic groups in Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya), is the only exception. Tables 2-4 display the various terms that are used to refer to Melanesians. Those terms are classified into three categories: terms used to refer to Melanesians in general (Table 2), terms meaning a specific category of Melanesians (Table 3), and terms for Melanesian soldiers (Table 4). A word marked with + is that used in a particular source, and that marked by ++ is that used most frequently. The symbol - means that the term is used just to indicate the inappropriateness of its usage.

Terms Referring to Melanesians in General

Many words are used to refer to Melanesians in general (Table 2). This is because the Japanese language did not and does not have any appropriate terms to designate the inhabitants of developing areas such as Melanesia. Among these terms, *gen-ju-min*, *do-jin*, and *do-min* are most frequently used. Each of these terms means "native" in English. Haneda (1985) used *do-jin* just once to tell that it was a discriminatory word. I think that the word *do-min* carried the same connotation. These words are rarely used by Japanese born after the war.

The materials offer sufficient evidence that Japanese soldiers usually called Melanesians *do-jin* or *do-min*, but these terms could not be used officially, for example in news items, even during the Pacific War.

Specific Category Terms for Melanesians

These words are also many in number (Table 3). Among these, *kanaka*, *kanaka-zoku*, and *papua-zoku* are used frequently. As Yamamoto points out, *kanaka* is a discriminatory term today, and it is not always clear how Japanese soldiers classified Melanesians by the terms *kanaka* and *papua* (cf Yamamoto 1985, 254-255).

Terms for Melanesian Soldiers

These terms are comparatively few (Table 4). Predominantly, they are used to designate Melanesians hostile to Japanese troops. Only two materials, Watanabe (1982, 142) and Kitamoto (1970, 54, 59-62, 64), use them to refer to Melanesians fighting for the Japanese.

Manners and Customs

There is abundant information concerning the manners and customs of people living in the Wewak area of Papua New Guinea (Table 5). Of all the materials with substantial descriptions on this theme, only Haneda (1985) mentions the customs in another area--Rabaul. Table 5 shows what kinds of manners and customs are described in the materials, giving the relevant pages in which each topic is mentioned.

The materials depict various kinds of customs. Generally speaking, however, their descriptions are too superficial to have ethnographic value. Nor do they pay much attention to the differences in customs between ethnic groups.

Japanese soldiers were sent to the battlefields without any knowledge of Melanesians (cf Yamanaka 1982, 177-178), and obviously did not stay in Melanesia for the purposes of research. Therefore they should not be criticized for the low ethnographic value of their records. Although a few descriptions include apparently improper conjectures, the materials laudably report the customs of Melanesians without a taste for the bizarre and racial prejudice.

Estimation

The materials assess Melanesians in terms of their personality, appearance, intelligence, mode of life, physical prowess and sense, laziness, and timidity (Table 6). In their estimation, "primitiveness" is often emphasized: primitive appearance, primitive lifestyles, laziness and timidity as traits of primitive people, and so on. Melanesian personalities are admired as honest and obedient. Even in this respect, however, the image of primitive Melanesians is expressed. For example, in a chapter introducing their "primitive" culture, Yamamoto writes, "Though they are said to be savage, Papuans understand affection, debt, and obligation" (Yamamoto 1985, 244).

Cooperation

The row in Table 7 labeled "cooperator" shows the page number where the personal name of a particular cooperative Melanesian appears first in a material. Fifteen names of Melanesians who worked for the Japanese troops are recorded in total. All of them were "chiefs." Among them, "Manga" appears in three materials.

The other rows are the same in character as those in Tables 5 and 6. For each way of cooperation, the sources are listed. "Food offering" includes some accidental gifts made by the Melanesians who happened on Japanese soldiers.

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It also tells about serious relations between Melanesians and Japanese. For example some materials point out that it was very hard for inhabitants to deliver an allocated amount of their harvest. Among others Melanesians worked as carriers, laborers for constructing roads and buildings, orderlies for mail delivery and other services, guides, and rescuers. The row "canoe" refers to cases where Melanesians offered their canoes for transporting goods and soldiers. Then it is similar to "carrier" and "guide" in the way of cooperation. Including "hospitality," the reception of soldiers who called at villages, all kinds of cooperation mentioned above are activities to support Japanese soldiers from the rear. Table 7 shows that an overwhelming majority of cooperative activities is included in this category. In contrast, the records of activities directly relating to military operations, "battle" and "watch" are small in number. The only incident in "testimony" is that a Melanesian gave favorable testimony for an accused Japanese after the war.

Intimacy

In the materials there are a number of episodes which speak of the intimate terms between Melanesians and Japanese soldiers. The authors are proud that they were good friends of Melanesians, and think that Japanese soldiers were fundamentally different from white men in this respect. "While white men discriminated against Melanesians and exploited them, Japanese were kind to and worked together with Melanesians." This is the view repeatedly written in the materials, sometimes as the words of Melanesians (cf Izumi 1943, 190-192, 194, 206-207; Suzuki 1982, 61; Ochi 1983, 121; Mitsukawa 1984, 331-332; Murosaki 1984, 177; Yamada 1985, 165-166; Yamamoto 1985, 252-253). Some of the materials insist that because the islands in the South Pacific are the birthplace of remote Japanese ancestors, the Melanesians are physically similar to the Japanese, and the Japanese have sympathy with the Melanesians (cf Izumi 1943, 193; Ochi 1983, 223; Yamamoto 1985, 252).

On the other hand, Japanese thought, "We should not spoil Melanesians. We have to cure their characters stained by laziness, and raise them up to the point where they willingly obey Japanese. This is one of the aims of this war" (cf Izumi 1943, 193-197). The efforts for enlightenment and their positive results are recorded in some of the materials (cf eg, Kitamoto 1970, 60; Arao 1975, 208; Watanabe 1982, 163; Yamanaka 1982, 190). However, I have found no evidence that the Japanese army made enthusiastic and systematic efforts to make Melanesians "the Emperor's loyal subjects." For example there are some episodes in which Japanese soldiers persuaded inhabitants to cooperate with them, but they appear only to have made irresponsible remarks to suit the occasion (cf Izumi 1943, 200-201; Kitamoto 1970, 32, 41,

45; Mitsukawa 1984, 330-332, 356-357). The only feature common to most of their remarks is the desire to stimulate Melanesians' rebellious attitudes toward white men.

Hostility

The Japanese troops gave Melanesians many things, such as rice, tinned food, sugar, cloth, and so on, to win their favor. But these goods were rapidly drained and never resupplied. Starving Japanese soldiers gave inhabitants everything and did anything to get food.

Out of their small community the Japanese troops were relatively free from their own conscience and the military discipline that did not directly concern action and class system (cf Kawamura 1988, 26-27). Contrary to military orders soldiers frequently used their arms for hunting (cf eg, Yamada 1953, 63-64, 87, 126, 192; Kitamoto 1970, 30; Hirao 1980, 70; Hoshino 1982, 114). It was also frequent to expropriate Melanesian villagers' crops (cf eg, Yamada 1953, 72, 86, 122; Kitamoto 1970, 88; Fukuyama 1980, 155). Even some conscientious soldiers thought that hunger was an adequate excuse for pillage (cf Hoshino 1982, 139-140). Although the headquarters in Wewak, in order to regulate food supply, prohibited barter with individual Melanesians (cf Suzuki 1982, 266-267; Murosaki 1984, 167), starving soldiers continued adding bandages, watch chains, razor blades, tweezers, and grenades to their list of merchandise (cf Ueki 1982, 180; Mitsukawa 1984, 248, 290; Murosaki 1984, 147).

Plunder caused dispute in every corner of Melanesia under Japanese occupation (cf Kitamoto 1970, 70; Fukuyama 1980, 145; Kitamoto 1984, 158-159; Haneda 1985, 205). Some Melanesians defended their gardens with arms (Ueki 1982, 202; Murosaki 1984, 52; Matsutani 1985, 240) and many ultimately revolted against the Japanese (cf Fukuyama 1980, 179-180; Fuke 1982, 16; Hoshino 1982, 156-157, 168, 170; Suzuki 1982, 271). For example at the close of the war it was too dangerous for Japanese troops to approach Melanesian villages in the Wewak area (cf Hoshino 1982, 138, 177; Yamanaka 1982, 221).

Conclusion

All the materials used in this paper were written by the Japanese who experienced the Pacific War in Melanesia. As a result the information offered by them is biased. For example they do not mention the facts that some starving soldiers ate Melanesians as well as soldiers of the Allied forces (cf Hara 1987, 151-152, 157-158; Miyakawa 1985, 55-66; Nakazono 1986, 43-46,

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51-72; Tuzin 1983), though some cases where Japanese soldiers ate Japanese soldiers are recorded (cf Kitamoto 1970, 71; Suzuki 1982, 242; Watanabe 1982, 177, 192; Ochi 1983, 160-131).

However, I think these materials represent their views of Melanesians well. Though Japanese soldiers used discriminatory terms to refer to Melanesians, and thought Melanesians primitive and lazy, they had not always despised Melanesians. They found many good characteristics in Melanesians and thought Melanesians similar to Japanese in some respects. I think that for the Japanese soldiers who believed the ideology of the Japanese Empire, Melanesians had to be worth saving from "evil" white men and enlightening by Japanese.

Japanese were urged to the war by the dogma, "You should expel white men, and enlighten the people in Asia and Oceania." Contrary to their intention the soldiers in Melanesia ended up relying on local inhabitants for food. In the materials they repeatedly expressed their regret and thanks to Melanesians (cf Kitamoto 1970, 46, 70, 102, 104; Fuke 1982, 17; Watanabe 1982, 196; Mitsukawa 1984, 308, 369, 394, 400, 433; Yamada 1985, 172). Melanesians were generous benefactors as well as barefoot primitives for Japanese soldiers.

Appendix A: List of Materials

- a Fuke, Takashi
1943 Letter from the South Seas. Unpublished letter, 12 pp.
- b Izumi, Kiichi
1943 *Battles in Solomon*. Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Sha.
- c Yamada, Eizo
1953 *Solomon Landing Force*. Tokyo: Nihon Shuppan Kyodo Co.
- d Kitamoto, Masamichi
1970(1969) *Kitamoto Reconnoitering Party*. Tokyo: Konnichi No Wadai Sha.
- e Arao, Tatsuo
1975 Rabaul. In *History of the Pacific War I: Pacific Islands*. Tokyo: Fuji Shoen.
- f Tanaka, Magohei
1975 Battles in New Guinea. In *History of the Pacific War I: Pacific Islands*. Tokyo: Fuji Shoen.
- g Yamazaki, Hidesuke
1975 Mole War. In *History of the Pacific War I: Pacific Islands*. Tokyo: Fuji Shoen.
- h Fukuyama, Takayuki
1980 *Battles in Solomons*. Tokyo: Tosho Shuppan Sha.
- i Hirao, Masaharu
1980 *Record of a Naval Doctor*. Tokyo: Tosho Shuppan Sha.
- j Fuke, Takashi
1982 Throwing a Beneficent Chief Over. *Kaiko Shi* (August).
- k Hoshino, Kazuo
1982 *Memory of the New Guinea War*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- l Suzuki, Masami
1982 *East New Guinea Front*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- m Ueki, Toshimasa
1982 *New Guinea*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- n Watanabe, Tetsuo
1982 *Landing Forces Disappearing in the Jungle*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.

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- o Yamanaka, Hideaki
1982 *A Reed from Naniwa*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- p Ochi, Harumi
1983 *Record of New Guinea War*. Tokyo: Tosho Shuppan Sha.
- q Kitamoto, Masamichi (main interviewee)
1984 *Marathon Troops in New Guinea*. In *My Experience During the Showa Era 4*. Tokyo: Ohbun Sha.
- r Mitsukawa, Motoyuki
1984 *Salt*. Tokyo: Sensi Kanko Kai.
- s Murosaki, Naonori
1984 *Recollection of an Anti-Aircraft Artillery Unit*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- t Haneda, Masami
1985 *The Southern Cross Seen Dimly in the War Fire*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.
- u Matsutani, Miyoko, editor
1985 *Folktales, Today II: Troops*. Tokyo: Rippu Shobo.
- v Yamada, Tasuku
1985 *New Guinea War*. Tokyo: Ohshi Sha.
- w Yamamoto, Katsue
1985 *A Duncce of Mountain Artillery Units*. Tokyo: Senshi Kanko Kai.

Appendix B: Tables

Table 1 Inhabitants Referred to by Materials

area index

1. Solomon Is. 2. Rabaul, New Britain I. 3. Northeastern Part of New Guinea 4. In and around Wovak, New Guinea 5. Western New Guinea 6. Umboi I.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	
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6				+																				

Table 2 Terms Referring to Melanesians in General

index

1. 住民<ju-min, inhabitants> 2. 部落民<buraku-min, villagers> 3. 部落住民<buraku ju-min, village inhabitants> 4. 新民<shin-min, new people> 5. 村民<son-min, villagers> 6. 島民<to-min, islanders> 7. 土着人<do-chaku-jin, natives> 8. 土着民<do-chaku-min, natives> 9. 蛮人<ban-jin, savages> 10. 原住民<gen-ju-min, natives> 11. 原住民族<gen-ju minzoku, native race> 12. 現地人<gen-ti-jin, natives> 13. 現地住民<gen-ti ju-min, local people> 14. 現住民<gen ju-min, present inhabitants> 15. 土人<do-jin, natives> 16. 土民<do-min, natives> 17. 黑人<koku-jin, black people>

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w
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16				+		+	+			+	++	++			+								+
17																					+		

Table 3 Specific Category Terms for Melanesians

index

1. カナカ<kanaka, kanaka> 2. カナカ人<kanaka-jin, kanaka people> 3. カナカ土民<kanaka do-min, kanaka natives> 4. カナカ土人<kanaka do-jin, kanaka natives> 5. カナカ族<kanaka-zoku, kanaka tribe> 6. カナカボーイ<kanaka boi, male kanaka> 7. カナカメリー<kanaka meri, female kanaka> 8. パプア<papua, Papuans> 9. パプア人<papua-jin, Papuans> 10. パプア族<papua-zoku, Papua tribe> 11. パプア現住民<papua gen ju-min, present inhabitants in Papua> 12.メラネシア族<meranesia-zoku, Melanesian tribe> 13.メラネシア現住民<meranesia gen ju-min, present inhabitants in Melanesia> 14. 部族<bu-zoku, tribe> 15. 種族<shu-zoku, race> 16. 食人種<shoku-jin-shu, cannibals> 17. 人喰い人種<hito-kui jin-shu, cannibals>

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w
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Table 4 Terms for Melanesian Soldiers

Index

1. グラック (黒人兵) <gerakku(koku-jin-hei), gerakku(black soldiers)> 2. 黒人兵<koku-jin-hei, black soldiers> 3. 黒人軍<koku-jin-gun, black troops> 4. 土民兵<do-min-hei, native soldiers> 5. 土民軍<do-min-gun, native troops> 6. 土人兵<do-jin-hei, native soldiers> 7. 土人軍<do-jin-gun, native troops> 8. 土人憲兵<do-jin ken-peï, native MP> 9. 原住民憲兵<gen-ju-min ken-peï, native MP>

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	
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Japanese Views of Melanesians

Table 5 Manners and Customs

clothing	(a)(b:188-9)(d:45-6)(f:278,283)(g:318)(l:259,273)(m:132)(n:97)(s:49,52) (t:89-91,122)(v:159)(w:243-4)
language	(c:137)(g:318-9)(i:68)(k:147-8)(l:298)(o:180)(r:285-7)(t:90-1)(v:158)(w:247)
music & dancing	(a)(d:44)(f:278)(k:150)(l:280)(p:223)(s:165,172,174-5)(v:167-8)(w:251)
food	(f:278)(k:163-4)(l:280)(m:190)(n:148-9)(t:93-4)(v:160-4)(w:133,248-9)
village & building	(d:48,81)(f:278,283)(k:150-1)(l:272)(t:93-4,122)(v:160)(w:247-8)
office	(a)(h:179)(p:212,246)(s:164,173)(t:94)(v:166)(w:244-6)
betel chewing	(d:32)(k:151)(m:132)(s:49)(t:90)(v:164)(w:249)
marriage & sex	(d:81)(p:223)(s:173,178)(t:91-2,95)(v:168)(w:134,246,249-50)
hunting & fishing	(k:168)(s:175-7)(t:88,122)(v:168)(w:249)
slit gong	(d:32-3)(k:148-9)(r:347)(v:158)(w:248)
pig	(a)(l:259)(s:178)(v:162-3)
horticulture	(r:319)(v:160)(w:251-2)
status of women	(s:173)(w:248)
money	(t:92-3)
education	(t:94-5)
sing-out	(k:149-50)
bush knife	(v:159)
art	(w:245)
cure	(w:245-6)
fire	(w:248)
religion	(t:91)
trade	(k:160)

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Table 6 Estimation

personality	(a)(c:153)(d:98)(n:97)(o:190)(p:224)(r:291,337,383-4) (s:172,179)(u:158)(v:183)(w:244)
appearance	(a)(b:186-9)(c:127-8)(d:33,45)(e:208)(l:20)(r:247)(w:130)
intelligence	(b:189-90)(e:208)(o:190)(r:286-7)(t:91)(u:172)(w:247)
mode of life	(a)(c:113)(l:61)(s:40-1,173)(w:250)
physical prowess & sense	(n:194)(p:223)(r:291,308,310)(s:52-3,165,178)
laziness	(a)(b:193-4)(n:312)(r:337)
timidness	(a)(s:52)(u:172)

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Table 7 Cooperation

food offering	(d:59-80)(h:165,179)(j:17)(k:130,144,162-3)(l:248,275)(n:92,147,149-50,175) (o:188-91,225-6)(p:250)(r:78,247,304,315,317-9,335-6,343,362) (s:52,120,162-3,166,169-71)(v:172)(w:130-2,134,170-1,173)
carrier	(b:217)(d:33-4,36,39-49,52-3,60,63,72-3)(e:208)(f:278,281)(k:144,165-6) (l:57,277)(n:142)(p:211,247-8)(r:305,316,359,385)(s:172)(t:124)(v:177)
laborer	(d:80)(e:208)(f:278,280)(h:179)(n:142,194,310-2,326)(o:180)(r:243,312,316) (s:52)(w:134)
guide	(b:217)(d:47)(k:144,184)(l:255,277-80)(n:183-5)(s:120,164-5,167-8,173,178)
hospitality	(d:33)(l:259-60,266,273)(n:261,315-6)(r:291,333)(s:169-70)(v:165-8)
orderly	(d:39,56)(e:208)(k:154)(l:277)(r:316,318,337)(s:165)
canoe	(b:206,268)(k:165)(l:275,278)(n:172-4)(w:130)
rescuer	(e:227)(h:128)(m:169)(u:157)
battle	(d:57,60-2,76-7,84-5,92-5,97-8,100)(l:110-4)(n:142-3)
watch	(b:200)(d:34)
testimony	(v:182)
cooperator	(d:33)(k:162)(l:110,254,258,260)(r:284,290-1,311)(s:174,176)(t:94)(w:134,244)

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