

Saipan's Camp Susupe

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Occasional Paper 42

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University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Honolulu

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ISSN 0897-8905

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Foreword

Recent events in Europe have graphically illustrated the terrible plight of refugees, forced from home with what few belongings could be carried, and massed by the thousands in makeshift and inadequate camps. The Pacific Islands were once the scene of similar tragedy, when the Allied forces battled the empire of Japan during World War II.

With the 7 December attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States became embroiled in a Pacific war that did not end until the Japanese surrender of 14 August 1945. For the Japanese civilians living on Saipan, Mariana Islands, that date was difficult to accept, no less difficult than the circumstances of their internment as wards of the victorious American forces. They were the unwanted residue of an unwanted war. They were commanded in military fashion by men who had no taste for the task, and who, for want of Japanese language skills, could not express whatever sympathy they might have felt.

To this scene, in the early weeks of 1945, came Norman Meller, a young naval officer who could at least speak the language of the internees and, he might hope, use his knowledge as an attorney to ameliorate their inexorable plight. How well he succeeded in overcoming innumerable hurdles is the subject of this work. That he accomplished as much as he did and kept a sense of humor is the wonder of it all.

As Dr Meller explains, "International law clearly defined the minimum standards to be observed for captured military personnel, but no comparable norms of clarity were applicable to civilians." Of those, it will be noted, there were some 18,000 squeezed into one small swampy area known as Camp Susupe.

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Lacking well-defined guidelines, Dr Meller found himself cast in a tour de force wherein he alternated roles as labor arbiter, detective, dietitian, agriculturist, economic advisor, and even impresario. (In the last role, he scrounged films to be shown at the camp. One of them featured Maestro Toscanini. The audience thought they were watching Charlie Chaplin and were highly amused!)

Dr Meller has been no stranger to Saipan since his wartime tour of duty. He has returned many times as consultant to the emerging island entities as they planned the constitutional governments that have evolved. His last visit, fifty years after the events described here, became the inspiration for this memoir.

The literature of World War II in Micronesia consists largely of military histories and autobiographical accounts of US soldiers and sailors. Understandably, the focus of most studies of the war has been strategy and battles. Commander Dorothy Richard, whose narrative history of the naval administration in Micronesia is the most detailed study available, recounts the US military's attempts to regulate civilian life on Saipan, as thousands of individuals—Carolinians, Chamorros, Koreans, Japanese, and Okinawans—crossed the American lines. Earlier, the US Navy had produced a pictorial history of Camp Susupe (1945), and in the slightly blurred black-and-white images of wartime devastation and the initial shanties a graphic tale emerges with an emotional impact far beyond the statistics and logkeeping of Richard's work. A more reflective piece on the administration of civilian camps on Saipan is found in John Embree's 1946 article, "Military Government in Saipan and Tinian," which criticized both US attitudes and the confusion of bureaucratic structure. For the indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians of Saipan, World War II was a historic landmark etched in memory through loss, sorrow, and eventual triumph. The recently produced history textbook for the high schools of the Northern Marianas contains considerable detail on Camp Susupe, and through author Don Farrell's writing a new

Foreword

generation of students will learn what their grandparents experienced and overcame. Dr Meller's work offers a personal account of the trying times on Saipan, and gives both historians and the general reader background information with the immediacy of first-person narrative.

DANIEL J PEACOCK

KAREN M PEACOCK

Preface

In July 1995 I was invited to return to Saipan to participate in a seminar about Camp Susupe, fifty years after the end of World War II. So far as I know, none of the Japanese or Korean civilians who had been interned in Susupe was on the island and attended, so that the reminiscences of both participants and audience applied primarily to the experiences of the Chamorro and Carolinian residents of Saipan. Some of the remarks volunteered by younger members of the audience equated Camp Susupe with the infamous German concentration camps in Europe. On inquiry I found that they were premised on little knowledge other than that many hardships were suffered by the local Islanders during the war, and mainly reflected their great resentment over the fact that the United States Government did not permit them to live outside the confines of the camp until 4 July 1946, long after the end of the war and by the time that both Japanese and Korean civilians had been repatriated. That is the Independence Day Saipan now celebrates each Fourth of July! Prodded by this experience, I determined to record my memories of Camp Susupe before history had been so reshaped—whether in the Marianas, Japan, Korea, or the United States—as to bear only faint resemblance to what actually occurred over a half century ago on Saipan. I was there from the beginning of 1945 until December of that year.

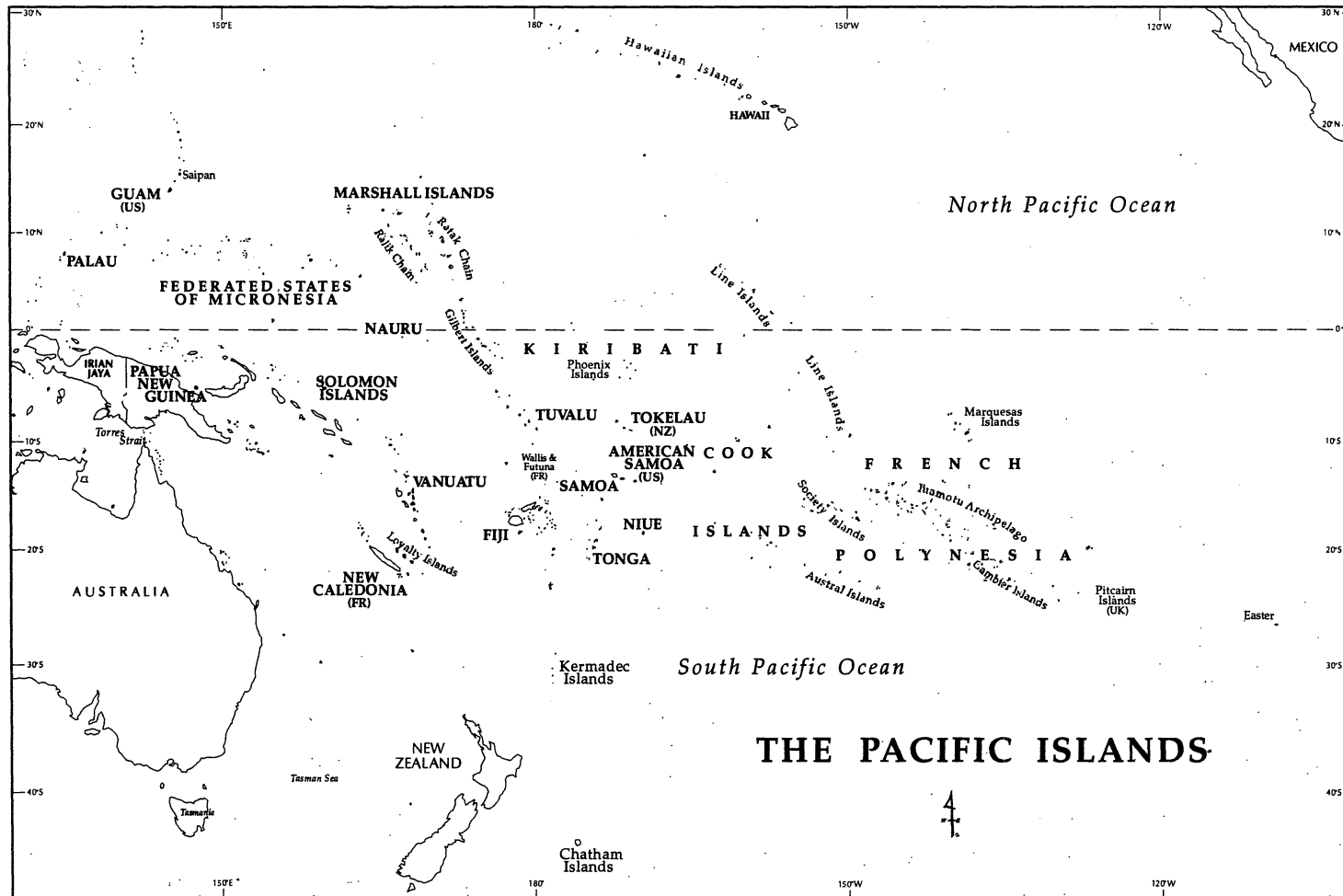
Almost every evening while on Saipan in 1945, I wrote a letter to my wife in San Francisco, sharing with her the unusual events of the day. Unfortunately I cannot say that this present account of Camp Susupe is based on materials extracted from those letters, for they have long since been disposed of as part of the “garbage” of the war years, along with the photographs of sample Susupe food rations, and the Japanese samurai sword with which I returned—to which reference will be found in chapter 11. Nevertheless, many memories of my service in naval military government while on Saipan remain, some poignantly vivid, probably reinforced by once having been written down. Where memory

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fails me as to specifics that are included in the text, reference to US Navy publications has helped to fill the lacunae. Also of assistance have been the very discerning observations of life in Camp Susupe over a two-week period in August 1945, by Dr John F Embree while on a mission for the Office of War Information. Later, when we were both faculty members at the University of Hawai'i, they were discussed further with him. I have not hesitated to contradict published sources where I know from my own experience that their contents are in error; consequently any such failure of concurrence should be regarded as intended and not due to oversight on my part.

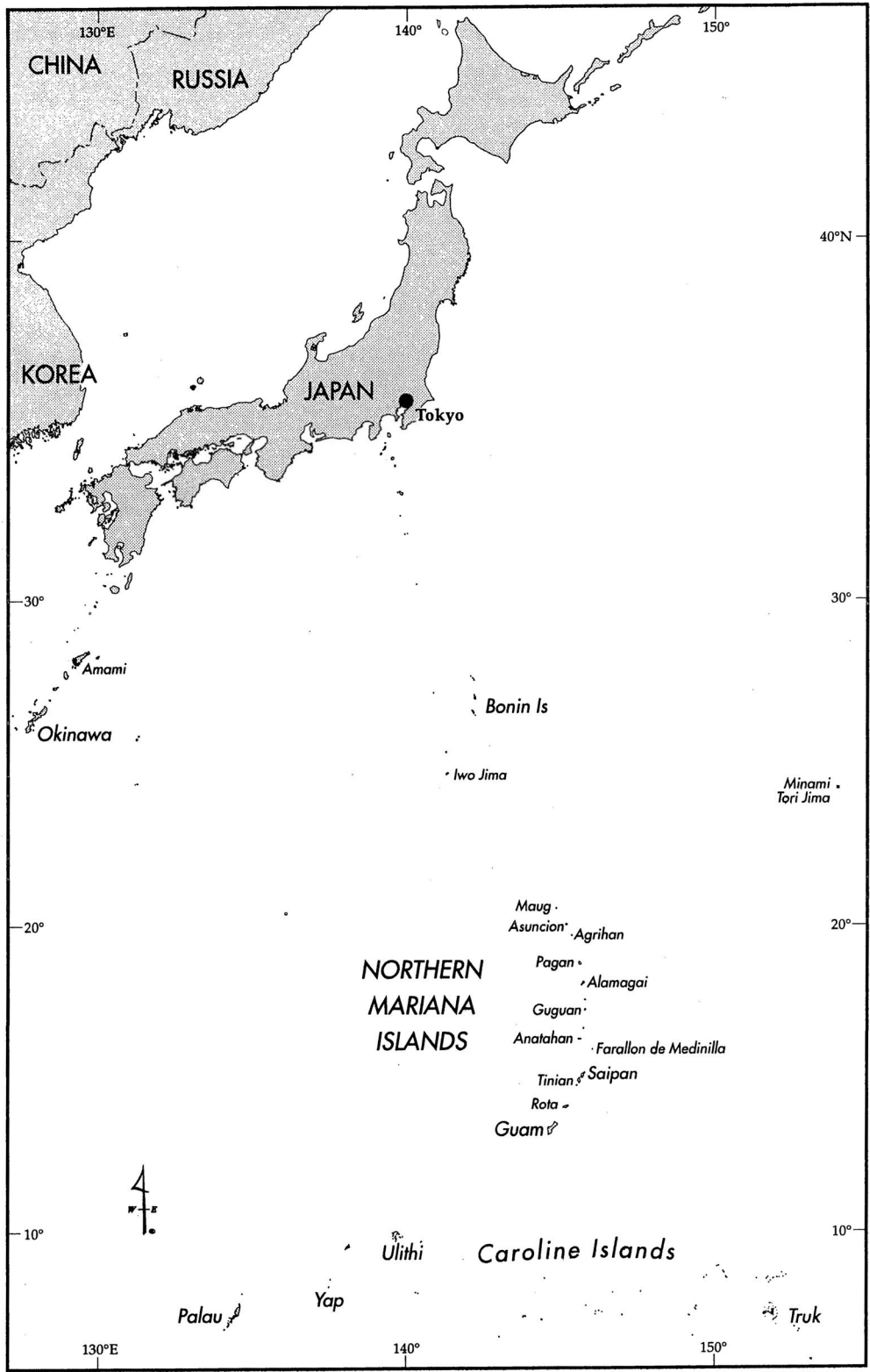
Chronology of Events

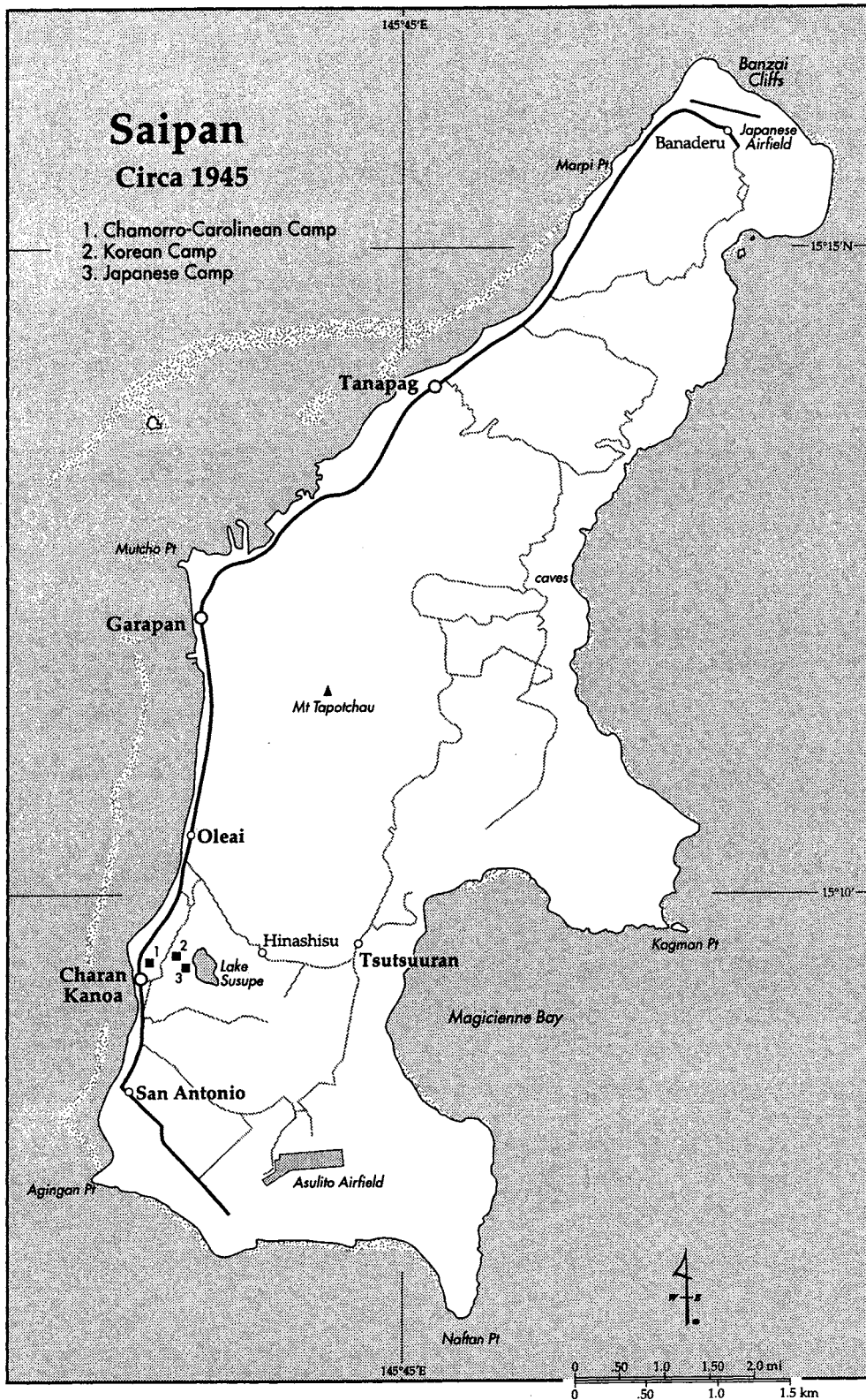
- 1920–1944 Northern Marianas, including Saipan, part of League of Nations mandate administered by Japan.
- 7 December 1941 Pearl Harbor attacked by Japanese. United States entered war.
- 8 December 1941 Japanese attacked Guam from bases on Saipan.
- 10 December 1941 Americans on Guam surrendered to Japanese.
- 31 January 1944 United States forces invaded Marshall Islands.
- 11 June 1944 United States bombardment of Saipan (*campo*) began.
- 15 June 1944 D day. United States forces invaded Saipan.
- 7 July 1944 Last banzai charge of Japanese military.
- 9 July 1944 Saipan secured.
- 1944–1962 Saipan under administration of United States Navy.
- 21 July 1944 Guam invaded by United States forces.
- 6 August 1945 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.
- 9 August 1945 Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.
- 14 August 1945 Japan surrendered.
- 2 September 1945 Surrender signed aboard USS *Missouri*.
- December 1945 Japanese and Korean citizens repatriated.
- 4 July 1946 Chamorro and Carolinean civilians permitted to live outside Camp Susupe.
- 18 July 1947 Northern Marianas, including Saipan, became part of United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by United States.
- February 1975 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands created.



THE PACIFIC ISLANDS







Peace



Early in 1945, after a tour at Pearl Harbor translating captured Japanese documents, I was ordered to Camp Susupe, serving initially as interpreter for the commander of Area 3, the Japanese compound. It was one of three areas of the camp where civilians were interned by the military government. My naval training had not prepared me for military government service. Neither then, nor after I succeeded to command of the Japanese compound, was I ever introduced to the military government and civil affairs manuals and handbooks that were supposed to guide my actions. Perhaps such book knowledge was considered unessential, as military government was expected, as well as directed, to integrate with the military operations and to depart from the rules as necessary to fit local conditions. As commander of the Japanese compound, by far the largest of the three civilian areas, the duties I assumed were mostly of a supervisory nature; I was to see that orders were observed, act as liaison between the naval military government command and the internal Japanese administration it had set up in Susupe, and assure that camp life continued without untoward incident.

Marine Corps civil affairs officers had landed on the Saipan beaches on 16 June 1944, the second day of the invasion, and on the fourth had declared the establishment of military government on the island. The naval military government contingent had followed close behind. Long before the assault phase was over and the marines had officially turned over civil affairs to the navy, the naval military government had assumed the herculean task of feeding, sheltering, and attending to the other basic needs of the nearly eighteen thousand civilians who survived the hellish cataclysm of small-island warfare. As a macabre footnote,

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this task had been immeasurably lightened by the deaths of over one-third of the civilians on the island. Some had been killed in the *campo* (the air and sea bombardment that began on D day minus 4), some in the fighting that followed, and others by the mass suicides of whole families as the position of the Japanese defending forces became ever more desperate. The survivors included some 13,500 Japanese, 1,350 Koreans, 2,230 Chamorros, and 800 Carolinians. Of the over 30,000 Japanese military on Saipan on D day, less than six percent survived.

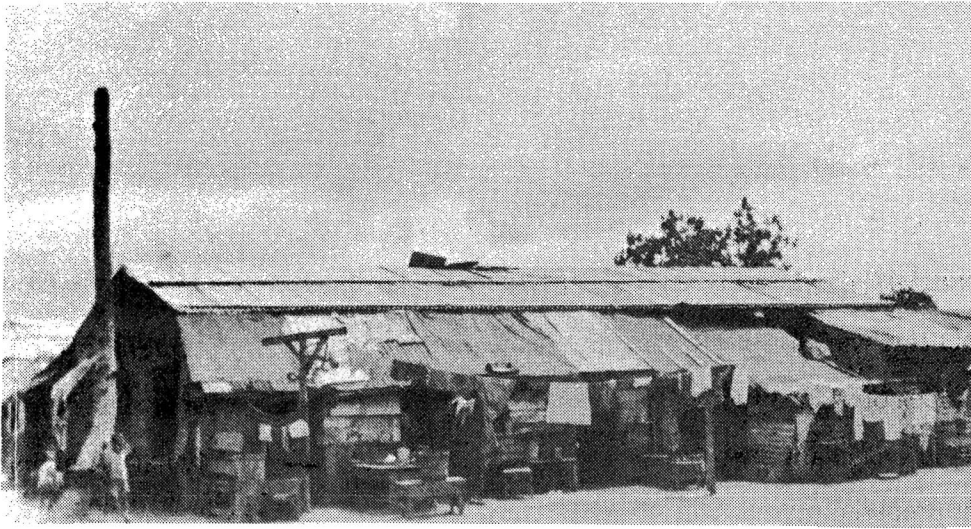
By the time I arrived on Saipan, the Japanese compound of Camp Susupe was well established and that initial period just a searing memory. The Korean laborers marooned on Saipan by the war were now accommodated in a small adjoining compound (Area 2). A mile or so away, the old sugar town of Charan Kanoa (Area 1) had been rehabilitated to accommodate the indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians who had been moved out of the original part of Camp Susupe (Area 3). The naval military government team had settled into well-established routines: overseeing the external farm where internees grew vegetables on their own plots to be cooked as part of the camp meals, running a school system to educate some eight thousand civilian children, facilitating the small-scale businesses established by civilians both inside the camp and on the "Ginza" just outside the Japanese area fence, promoting the production of handicraft and its sale to the GIs on the island, and providing a range of services comparable to those of any small city.

Saipan was now a major air and naval base, with its huge Kobler and Isley Fields fully operational for long-range bombers. Daily, hundreds of B-29s were taking off from the island, neighboring Tinian, and not-so-distant Guam, to drop their saturation loads of incendiary bombs on targets in Japan. Clearly, the engine roar of the airplanes leaving Saipan could be heard in camp, just as the yellow lights under the cockpits of the returning planes with wounded airmen aboard

could be seen. Previously the Japanese compound had seethed with rumors about the Japanese navy shortly coming to liberate Saipan and to drive the Americans into the sea. When the vessels failed to materialize, these whispered stories metamorphosed into imminent, surreptitious landings from Japanese submarines bent on committing devastating sabotage. Indeed, an air raid launched from Okinawa and Iwo Jima had permitted Japanese planes to reach Saipan and bomb its airfields, but soon the taking of Iwo Jima by the American armed forces had foreclosed any repetition.

Earlier, in February 1944, United States armed forces had landed in the Marshall Islands, at the eastern boundary of Japan's League of Nations Micronesian mandate. In March the Japanese evacuated between 3,000 and 5,000 civilians, mostly women and children, from Saipan to Japan. Some 27,000 to 30,000 civilians remained. While the Japanese authorities had incorrectly anticipated that the Palaus would be the next Micronesian invasion target, they were taking no chances. However, they could not have foreseen the inexorableness of the American military thrust, which would continue to carry the fighting ever closer to the Japanese homeland. News of how the tide of war had turned against the Japanese, and of the B-29s raiding Tokyo almost at will, reached Camp Susupe's internees intermittently through print, film, and (indirectly) broadcasts of the island military radio. Little, if any, of this was in Japanese, and most had to be filtered through civilians with limited English-language abilities. Undoubtedly much of it was watered down and its import discounted. Nevertheless, morale within the Japanese compound, always poor due to camp living conditions, was further undermined. A majority of the internees were of Okinawan ancestry, brought to Saipan from that island to labor in the sugar fields; with Okinawa under American control, it no longer promised to be a place of ultimate refuge should the war someday end in a stalemate. No wonder there could be

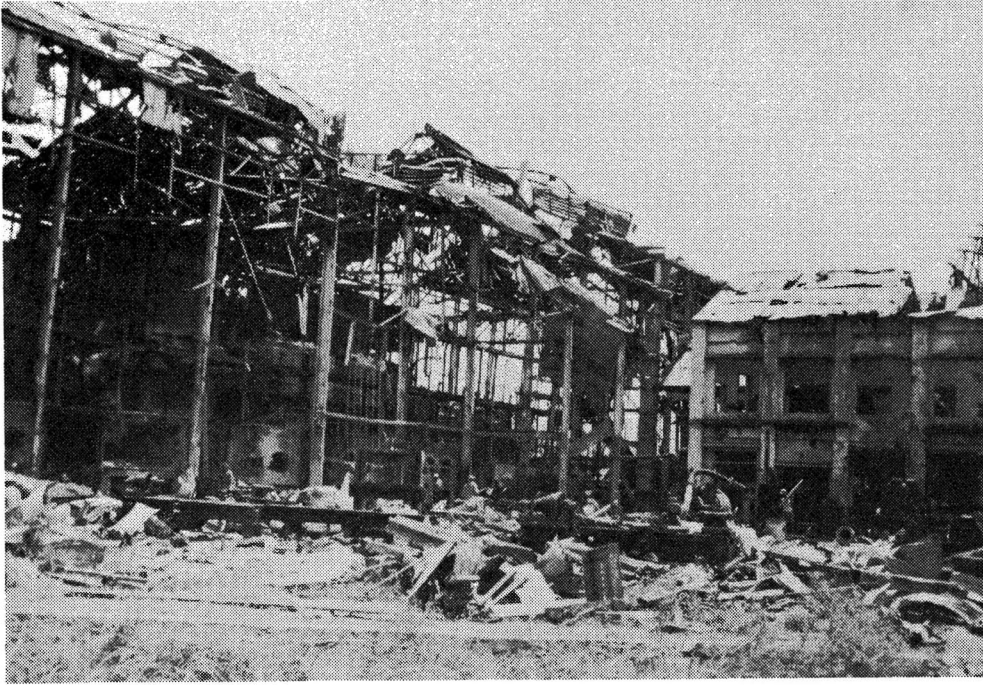
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A shiksha in the Japanese compound. (John Embree)

disagreement over what was actually occurring outside the confines of the isolated little world that was Camp Susupe.

Fifty years later, it is difficult to recall all the details of the slumlike conditions under which the 13,500 Japanese civilians lived. Almost half of them were children under sixteen years of age. Row upon row of nondescript *shik'sha* (barracks), twenty feet wide and twice as long—166 of them in all—had been erected out of scrap lumber salvaged from the debris of war left after the American invasion forces pushed across the island. Each was separated from its neighbors by about its own width to reduce the danger of fire. *Benjo* (open-pit latrines) were interspersed throughout the compound. At least one hundred feet from the barracks, strategically placed shallow wells tapped the island's high water table to meet the internees' need for water for daily bathing and for laundering their clothes. Corrugated iron salvaged from the town of Garapan and the old sugar mill, which before the war had been at the heart of Saipan's economy, served both as roofing for the barracks and for shoulder-high shielding around the latrines. Many of the sheets still bore bullet and shrapnel holes. Rain falling on



Ruins of the sugar mill at Charan Kanoa. (*Norman Meller*)

the metal roofing was caught in used oil drums lined up under the eaves, and provided a welcome substitute for the highly chlorinated potable water supplied to the camp. Movable screens and temporary partitions erected by the internees compartmentalized the interiors of the low barracks in an attempt to provide a modicum of privacy to the 75 to 100 civilians who called each one home.

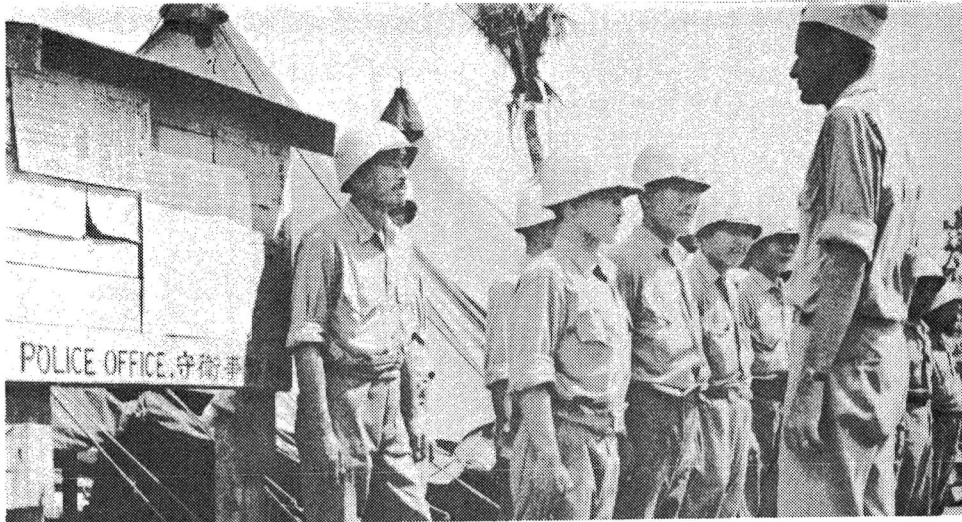
Each day, long lines of Japanese civilians queued up before waiting trucks, all with labor tags of red cloth attached to their clothing and carrying personal identification cards. Most of the men were destined for the huge warehouses erected near the docks, to move the mountains of materiel continuously being landed and stockpiled on Saipan to carry the war ever closer to Japan. The women worked mainly at the army military laundry, to which the GIs on the island sent their dirty clothing and linens.

Within the barbed-wire fence that surrounded the compound was a function-

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ing small city, complete with its own *yakuba* (civilian administration), *suijiba* (kitchens) providing cooked meals, several dispensaries tending to minor ills and serving as hospital intakes for the more serious cases, an orphanage for the care of youngsters whose parents had died and for whom no foster families could be found, and two ethnically distinct police forces. The internal Japanese police enforced observance of the camp rules; the Chamorro and Carolinian police guarded the periphery, challenging at the gates any internee seeking to leave and searching all those returning from work. Probably the largest single source of employment for the island's indigenous men was this police force. In patrolling the compound fence, they were nightly supplemented by a US Marine detachment, nominally to stop the possible infiltration of Japanese military personnel still hiding in the island's central spine of hills, but also to interdict American GIs bent on seeking the female companionship they had so long forgone, even if with a civilian of the enemy.

Abruptly all of this came to a halt one day in June, and I was faced with an unprecedented problem that somehow would have to be resolved. The captain in charge of the naval hospital on the side of the Japanese compound, and responsible for maintaining its internees' health and the camp's sanitation, phoned to alert me. The civilian who drove the main garbage truck around the Japanese compound, emptying the trash cans and carting their contents off to the dump, had been arrested for causing a disturbance. Clearly implied was that, as Japanese area commander, I should somehow intervene so that essential garbage service would continue uninterrupted. As a lowly lieutenant, junior grade, who was I to demur? I left my office, which was close to the main gate, just outside the Japanese compound, returned the salute of the Chamorro policeman guarding the gate, and walked through, headed for the Japanese police station a short distance away.



The Japanese police force at Camp Susupe. (*US Navy*)

As I walked over to where the garbage truck driver was being held, I searched my memory for anything pertinent I could recall. He was big for a Japanese, heavy of body, and gross of face. The 55-gallon used oil drums, now fitted with wooden covers, that served as the camp's trash containers required a very strong man to lift and empty them when filled. His was a smelly and distasteful job, for which there were probably few applicants. The accented Japanese he spoke was a distant cry from the Tokyo dialect on which I had been trained in the naval language school, and beyond the exchange of minimal greetings, I had found it difficult to understand him. At best I may have spoken to him a half dozen times or so and was not particularly conscious of him when he was on his rounds. The general impression he left was of stolidness, of being mentally slow, if not possibly a little retarded.

When I reached the police station, I found the garbage truck driver blustering to the policeman at his side and to anyone else within hearing range that he had done nothing wrong, that it was the people of Camp Susupe who were responsible—they had caused the disturbance. As things quieted down a little, in anticipation of the arrival of the public safety officer, I managed to talk to the

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policeman. What had happened? Well, there had been a fight last night in the camp. The garbage truck driver had started distributing leaflets, people objected and tried to stop him, shouting came to shoves and then blows, and the police were called in to restore order.

And the offending leaflet? It consisted of a single page and bore but one Japanese *kanji* ㊦, a character symbolizing peace. I was shown a sheet of paper that previously had been badly crumpled and was now only partly smoothed out. The calligraphy was boldly executed, with wide brush strokes stretching across the entire surface, and reproduced through some form of lithography. No accompanying text, no explanation, no signature. The single sheet, with the Japanese character roughly drawn and crudely reproduced across it, remains fixed in my mind's eye. Something unusual was occurring, with a disturbing potential that I could sense but not articulate. I never did learn all of the background to the affair, but of one thing I feel certain: somehow related to it was the murder that followed a month or so later, the only major crime that occurred in Camp Susupe during the near year I was on Saipan.

I motioned to the garbage truck driver to sit down beside me in a chair in an empty corner of the room. "Tell me what happened. Did you pass out the handbill? Why? Did you write it?" I cannot remember if I asked whether anyone else was involved, but in any event it would have been unnecessary as his answers quickly resolved that matter. He himself had prepared the leaflet and personally handed it out. It was essential that there be peace in camp, and he was merely calling for everyone to live together peacefully. Angrily, he denied causing the disturbance; he was just distributing the leaflet, and it was other people who tried to stop him. They had started the fight. To my question of what was disturbing peace in the camp, and why use a handbill, he just grunted inarticulately and flayed his arms around wildly. Adamantly he refused to furnish any further

explanation. I was convinced that something disturbing was afoot inside the Japanese compound, but my immediate reaction was that it hardly seemed appropriate, let alone just, to single out the putative peacemaker for punishment. The disagreement over what was occurring outside Camp Susupe could not be adequately expressed by the inarticulate garbage truck driver before me, if indeed he could ever convince himself to take me, a *gaijin* (foreigner) who represented the enemy, into his confidence—or so I reasoned, as I decided what to do next.

As soon as the public safety officer arrived at the police station, I spoke to him at his office. He knew me well, as I had previously had dealings with him as Japanese area commander and, possibly of some significance given the setting, I was the only American-trained lawyer in the naval military government on Saipan other than the judge. Exactly what I then said to him I cannot recall, but I am sure it would have been to alert him to the import of the matter coming up, in terms of maintaining both camp sanitation and internal camp harmony. Because of this I was there and ready to appear on behalf of the garbage truck driver if a formal charge were filed. Although the question of counsel being desired was nominally raised at all camp court proceedings, and as routinely waived, I was introducing a new element into the normal process. The driver was then called before the public safety officer, who told him that the police had charged him with fighting in camp. The driver's response was to admit that a fight had indeed occurred, but to deny having started it. The public safety officer inquired further of the police and then proceeded to lecture him on the seriousness of disturbing the peace and to warn him that he would be tried before a judge and sentenced to jail if it were to happen again. The legal argument I was already mentally formulating to give before the summary court judge in defense of free speech and press, even in a military government compound, suddenly became moot. Far better to say nothing and hastily take my departure, with the garbage truck driver in tow.

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Superficially, at least, life in the Japanese compound returned to normalcy, and so did the scope of my responsibilities. The garbage truck driver resumed his regular rounds, and if any further distribution of handbills occurred it was not brought to my attention. In the external world, however, normalcy did not prevail, and the Allies' successful prosecution of the war as reported in the news made it certain that the anticipated invasion of Japan was daily growing ever more imminent. For me, even if I did not take part in what promised to be a bloody onslaught, it meant long years of occupation duty in Japan, or so I had been informed when I entered the navy's Japanese Language Training Program.

Then from Tinian, just a few miles away, the B-29 strikes that dropped their atomic loads on Japan were launched. For a few days an unstructured sense of anticipation pervaded the military government officers' mess, much akin to the atmospheric tenseness that prevails just before a hurricane hits. Something was afoot, but what? Finally, in its full enormity the news broke: the Japanese government was surrendering! Its only other option was to face annihilation of the entire nation. Gradually the complete details unfolded. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were each destroyed by a revolutionary bomb developed by the United States, and the Japanese were capitulating. The emperor would broadcast this to the Japanese people and direct them to comply. The battleship USS *Missouri* would go to Japan, and on its deck General MacArthur, backed by a coterie of Allied military commanders, would receive the official surrender of the Japanese government. Uncontested occupation by Allied forces would follow. Not only was all this communicated first via radio news, and then formal word from Island Command, but soon it was supplemented by recordings of the Japanese emperor's address to his people and by motion-picture films of the surrender proceedings. I made sure that the internees in Camp Susupe received all of this in its entirety just as soon as I had authorization to do so and, as well, discussed its import with the key

officials of the camp's Japanese internal administration. The result? The Japanese compound split sharply into two positions, with the civilians in each adamant and able—from their own perspective—to fully justify their position.

To those who had been closely following the course of the war from the time Saipan fell, it was obvious that the invasion of the Japanese homeland was merely a matter of time. The pictures of the war devastation it had already suffered from American bombings lent credence to the described horror that befell Hiroshima and Nagasaki, even if the scientific explanation of the destructive force of the atomic bomb was incomprehensible. The still photographs posted and the surrender movies projected in camp indisputably showed the USS *Missouri* in Japanese waters and that officials of the Japanese government came aboard the battleship to sign papers before standing Allied military officers, who in demeanor and action appeared neither downcast nor even constrained, but rather triumphant. The clinching argument was the record of the emperor's voice acknowledging defeat and directing the Japanese people to cooperate with the victors. To this group of internees, distasteful as it might be to have to admit it, hope for a stalemate was no longer feasible, and the war was over. The important question now was when were the Japanese civilians going to leave Saipan and be repatriated?

Those who denied that the war had ended referred to almost the same evidence, but with their own interpretations of the significance of its details. The Americans had to go to Tokyo, because it was *they* who were surrendering to the Japanese. If Japan were really capitulating, it would have sent one of its warships to the United States carrying an envoy to sue for peace. Look at the clothes General MacArthur and the other officers wore: no dress uniforms, not even coats and ties, while the Japanese representatives were in proper *gaijin* (foreign) formal attire. The pictures of damage to Japanese places could have easily been falsified, designed to draw attention away from the Americans' own losses. And

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as for the emperor's message, that, too, was a fraud, for only with the greatest difficulty could one understand the arcane Japanese in which it was couched.

I believed that the schism within the Japanese compound would gradually heal. Over time the American GIs on the island, with whom the civilian workers had contact almost daily, would necessarily have to vary their routines in a myriad of changed ways that would ultimately bring all in camp to the realization that indeed the war was over and Japan had lost. What I had failed to take into account was that there might be internees so committed to the ideology of Japanese invincibility that they would resort to murder to silence those who did not concur. This error was poignantly revealed by the stabbing death that occurred one dark night as the victim was asleep in his barracks. It is difficult to determine exactly why he and not someone else had been singled out. The man murdered was middle-aged, married, worked outside the compound during the day, had held a responsible position in the sugar industry before the war, and was regarded as a sound and dependable person. While he had publicly argued against the position taken by the diehards in camp, he did not play a leadership role in denouncing their views.

An investigation conducted by the military government's civilian plumber, a former detective in the prewar Saipan government's police, led to the recovery of the death weapon from an open-pit latrine where it had been thrown. The perpetrator of the crime proved to be a college student who had arrived on Saipan from Japan to engage in agricultural field research shortly before the American invasion. Only long after the island was declared secured had he left the hills to seek the food and shelter of the Japanese compound. While working as a night clerk for the Japanese area's internal administration, his actions had attracted the attention of the camp's Chamorro guards, who surmised he was trying to signal to the Japanese military still hiding in the island's interior. However, it had not

been possible to confirm their suspicions and remove him from camp to the army's prisoner-of-war stockade. Later, with the war over, he was one of the civilians in the compound who vigorously denied that the news of the Japanese surrender was true.

In retrospect, the uneducated garbage truck driver had presciently sensed the existence of a fundamental ideological cleavage in the Japanese area, and his appeal for peace had sought to ameliorate its impact. However, the full potential for violence that it concealed would not be revealed until the war was over, when, ironically, a more encompassing peace had been declared.

The Many Faces of Bureaucracy

When at the University of Chicago after World War II, I found myself enrolled among some half dozen fellow students in the social sciences who had all served at the lower levels in military government—they in the European and Asian theatres. On sharing experiences, we found ourselves in full accord: military government as written up for the official armed forces reports of the war, as well as depicted in the popular literature of the time, bore relatively little resemblance to what had actually happened in the field. Materially contributing to the disparity were the bureaucratic inadequacies of military government that tended to be glossed over in these accounts, particularly as contributed to by the cross-cultural ineptitude of the personnel staffing military government.

As best I can reconstruct Susupe's initial traumatic period, those early days must have been chaotic, contributed to by inadequate preplanning and a military government staff insufficient in numbers and unprepared by training for the magnitude of the task they would have to undertake. Rather than being in a position of succeeding to and running an ongoing government, they faced a total collapse of organized authority and an island in complete physical disarray. I can but conjecture the ensuing hectic flurry of activity, as when military government personnel, navy Seabees, army engineers, and interned civilians were all engaged in constructing what was to become a small city, erecting the barracks with materials scrounged from everywhere, and digging the wells and pit latrines essential to making the area habitable. By the time I arrived on Saipan, all of what once must have seemed nearly incomprehensible confusion had been replaced by an orderly

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municipality, with everyone observing regular routines. Authority for tending to various functional needs of the internees was parceled out among a number of specialized units of the naval military government. Concern for the remainder was left to Susupe's three separate civilian administrations, which also had the task of facilitating the work of the various units, including making sure the interned civilians complied with military government orders. In addition, as the basic administrative entities of the camp, they had the residual responsibility of responding to all municipal-type matters that did not fall within the jurisdiction of some other unit of the military government.

Early in the life of Camp Susupe, the commanders of the three ethnic areas occupied posts high on the organizational chart of the military government, but by the time I arrived on Saipan, these officers had been eclipsed in importance. Rather, as I began serving as the interpreter and assistant to the Japanese area commander, I found the administration of Camp Susupe divided into little functional fiefdoms, the circumscribed turf of each being jealously guarded, and all superimposed on the three civilian administrations charged with residual concern for the general welfare of the internees resident in their respective portions of the camp.

The three units of the naval military government responsible for supplying food to civilians, taking care of their health, and assuring their safety almost continuously impinged on and shaped the activities of the Japanese area's internal administration (*yakuba*). While the *yakuba* was charged with staffing and running the cookhouses, the food allocations the kitchen crews received daily from the Supply Office pretty well determined the pattern of meals the cooks prepared. The Supply Office also attended to payrolls and matters of finance affecting the civilians, as well as providing the supplies and equipment occasionally needed by the civilian administration. Crews under the supervision of the hospital serviced the camp's sanitation needs, while the dispensary it operated in the Japanese area

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and the various services maintained in the hospital tended to the civilians requiring dental and medical care. But of all the naval military government's units, the Public Safety Office was the one most constantly encountered. Unlike the other units, not only were its headquarters physically located in the Japanese area, rather than outside the camp, but the posts of its internal Japanese police were sited throughout Area 3. In addition, the external police, composed of Chamorros and Carolinians, reported to the Public Safety Office and continuously guarded the perimeter of the camp.

A distinctive set of the naval military government's units was charged with responsibility for the various economic aspects of Camp Susupe life, some directly under the Economics Section and others separately administered but with their heads reporting to the navy lieutenant in charge of the Economics Section. Among those so separately administered were the Agriculture, Fisheries, Labor, and the Handicraft & Light Industries units. These economic activities touched the lives of all internees over school age other than the infirm and the aged. Except for rendering assistance as requested and bringing to my attention such general issues as indicated that internees were encountering difficulties in compliance, the Japanese administration abjured attention to economic matters. Correspondingly, to a great extent so did I.

The remaining units of the military government affected other aspects of life in Area 3, but normally their activities were outside the scope of the Japanese administration's responsibilities. The work of one of them, the Legal Office, primarily touched the administration only through the repercussions emanating from the Provost Court decisions on civilian cases brought before it. Should kitchen personnel be found guilty of diverting food, the *yakuba* might respond by directing all *dantaicho* (section leaders) to take steps guarding against repetition. However, in anticipation of a guilty verdict, the *yakuba* would probably have taken proactive steps at an earlier stage, when the public safety officer first

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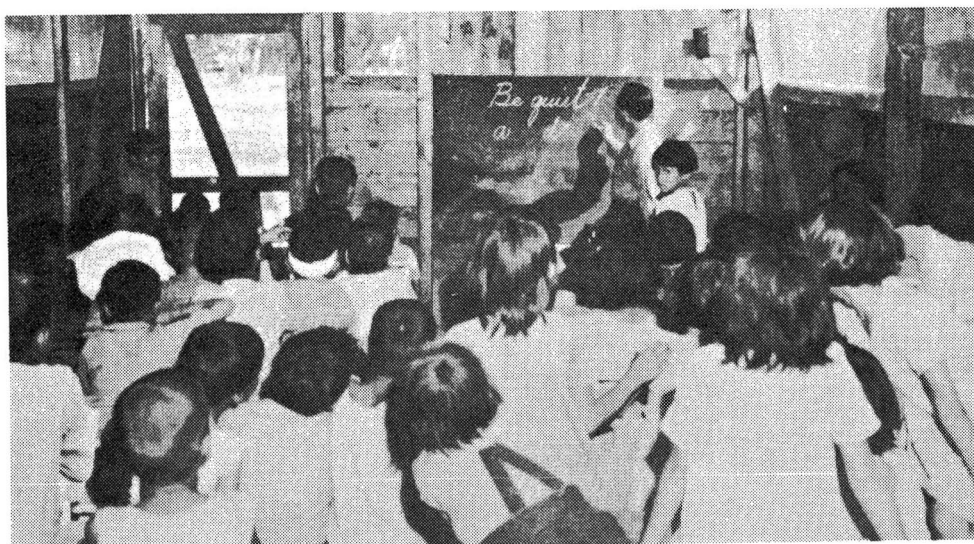
framed the charges on which the case was based.

Another unit in the military government organization—the Education, Welfare, and Religion Section—worked closely with the civilian administrations of all three ethnic areas in maintaining a school system for the children interned, with the welfare and religious needs of Area 3 mostly attended to by the *yakuba*. No provision had been made in the naval military government plans for education, and regular teaching of classes evolved in camp out of a recreational and outdoor activity program. Civilians erected the buildings used for public schools in the Japanese area and on the farm. By the spring of 1945, children between the ages of eight and fifteen were enrolled in thirteen schools. Attendance was voluntary, and former schoolteachers conducted classes. The Red Cross furnished some school supplies, the Hawai'i Department of Education sent textbooks printed in English, the Office of War Information contributed by publishing an English-language primer, and the naval military government itself prepared a number of simple readers for use in the schools.

When I arrived on Saipan, some four thousand students were in school. Although by naval order the teaching of the Japanese language was prohibited, by necessity Japanese continued as the medium of instruction in Area 3, as almost no teachers possessed English-language proficiency. When compulsory English-language classes were instituted under naval order, with American *nisei* from the army who had accompanied me from Hawai'i assigned as lead teachers, the Japanese civilians in Area 3 sought unsuccessfully to delay the introduction of teaching English until the fifth grade. They presented a petition stressing the need of the Japanese children for instruction in their own language. There was no indication that the officials of the *yakuba* took any formal part in mobilizing the mild protest, but I am confident that a public petition of this nature would not have been submitted without their having expressed support.

It soon became apparent to me that the Japanese administrators in Area 3 and

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A schoolroom in Area 3. (*US Navy*)

civilians employed in subordinate positions of the naval military government had established working relationships that enabled their respective duties to mesh reasonably smoothly. A unit launching a new policy or introducing major changes might communicate formally through the area commander's office to the Japanese administration's office in the *yakuba*, in part to establish a paper trail. Normally a different process characterized the reverse flow of communications, reflecting the subordinate role of the Japanese civilian administration. As requested by that administration, I would informally communicate with the head of the unit whose jurisdiction covered the problem being encountered. Usually this signalled the inability of the Area 3 administrators to work out the difficulty with their civilian counterparts in the unit. Not infrequently, the problem traced back either to an obstacle, erected somewhat arbitrarily by the officer in charge of the unit, that the administration's contact could not ignore, or a personality clash between the Japanese civilians involved. Very seldom were matters forwarded officially up the chain of command from my office, through the camp's executive officer, to the operational head of the naval military government.

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I, of course, had no contact with the admiral who was theater commander in charge of all military operations on Saipan and, in addition to his other duties, was responsible for military government on the island. The same pretty much held true for his deputy, an army colonel charged with administering the affairs of Camp Susupe. I have no memory of having been introduced to the colonel when joining the Susupe staff. Rather my recollection of him is of a far different nature, centering around the frame house, with walls of *cariso* matting (a woven island material) located on the swimming beach outside the camp's civilian area, which the colonel had ordered built for his personal use. It was pointed out to me during my orientation to Camp Susupe as the first "permanent" structure erected by the military government—at a time when providing minimum shelter for civilians still remained critical. Although separated by some distance from the rest of the "officers' territory" on the beach, I could occasionally see, and hear, the colonel and his guests from Island Headquarters enjoying the amenities of his quarters. Given the fact that Island Headquarters had been constructed at considerable cost high on the side of Mt Tapotchau, well above the heat of the island's littoral plain, and Navy Headquarters were similarly sited on heights closer to Saipan's harbor, I early concluded that the military "brass" were not averse to assigning high priority to their own personal comfort. Perhaps I should not dwell too heavily on this, for taking care of oneself had illustrations closer to home. Once the naval military government was out of its initial temporary quarters, the platform tent settlement that next served the needs of its personnel was soon replaced by ample Quonset facilities, separated for officers and enlisted men, each with its own mess and recreational facilities, and located on Saipan's best swimming beach.

The attention of administrators to their personal concerns also could be observed in the *yakuba*, but given the situation, in far more constrained ways. For example, at their request, the budget of Area 3 made provision for a tea server to

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be on the administration's staff. Her duty was to tidy up the premises and keep the officers supplied with cups of hot tea. The cost to the military government of the young woman's services was nominal—15 or 25 cents a day—but the symbolism of the service contributed its mite to raising the status of the administration's dignitaries, and perhaps their comfort. For my part, given Saipan's heat, whenever I visited the *yakuba* it was only as a matter of courtesy that I would sip at the tin can, with its rolled-back lip and filled with steaming tea, that would immediately appear at my elbow. Camp rules required the Japanese administration officers, like all internees, to occupy places in the barracks assigned by the military government, and they were denied any ability to erect separate living quarters for themselves. However, I would not be surprised to have my suspicion confirmed that the space they enjoyed was less crowded than that occupied by the average civilian.

Camp Susupe's naval military government held no periodic staff meetings, had no internal newsletter, nor offered any systematic interaction that would keep all informed of ongoing activities. I learned that the army colonel was no longer serving as our commanding officer only when I was told to accompany his replacement, a navy captain, to the Japanese barber and translate exactly how he wished his hair to be trimmed. Informally, the rumor mill within the unit alerted me to all of the scuttlebutt, including the occasional peccadillo. For example, a fellow officer was arrested by the Chamorro police at Charan Kanoa one evening for violating the nonfraternization rule by paying court to a nubile Chamorro miss, even though his courtship was primly conducted in the presence and with the apparent consent of her parents.

It took me a while to grasp the full organizational dimensions of Susupe's naval military government and understand how its various parts articulated. More significantly, this period offered me an opportunity to size up the character and competence of the officers holding the key posts in the units whose activities

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affected the lives of the Japanese civilians. Some of these officers had participated with the original landing forces or had arrived shortly after, and were now awaiting rotation. One of them, my tentmate when I arrived on Saipan, I found early one morning walking on the sand near our quarters, gently telling the waves lapping at the beach to go back. Becoming "rock happy" was a recognized sign of burnout and basis for reassignment. Others of my compatriots were recent replacements like me, and were still attempting to grow into the roles whose dimensions had been defined for them by their predecessors. In both cases the effect was to reinforce the status quo, so that there was little incentive among the officers in the military government to initiate any major change. Their reaction to suggestions originating from outside their own units was almost automatically to respond negatively.

I soon learned that to be successful in achieving some desired modification of the activities of a unit in Area 3 where the express approval of the head officer was required, it was first necessary to develop a congenial relationship with him. When an opportunity presented itself, the subject could be broached and the initial negativism that otherwise could be anticipated dispelled. Once the way had been prepared, I could try more structured communication. Superficially, all of this appeared diametrically contrary to the situation prevailing in the internal administration of the Japanese area, but in fact it was not.

In Area 3 the members of the Japanese administration also tended to be set in their ways, but they differed materially in how they registered resistance to a proposed change. Instead of immediately and openly raising objection when some modification was broached, nods of comprehension if not voiced concurrence could be observed, but, depending on the subject, might be followed by foot-dragging in execution. For matters not ordered to be speedily implemented, the mayor might defer transmitting the directions until the next periodic meeting of the *dantaicho* (section heads), at which the means for collective compliance

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could be considered. The resulting discussion could well result in execution being further delayed until at least another meeting, and sometimes longer. Here the internal structure of the Japanese administration was being used to slow down response. Only gradually would resistance to change give way to the “inevitability” of compliance.

In July 1995, a half-century after the end of World War II, when attending the seminar held on Saipan to commemorate Camp Susupe, I heard with surprise the Reverend Vincent Prestagiacomo, who also had been invited from the United States, declare that the mission of the naval military government on Saipan during the war was to prepare the civilians on the island for democratic government. He insisted that is what he was instructed in Hawai‘i when, as an enlisted man, he was detailed to the military government team before it left for the Marianas. It is possible that this policy was intended for the indigenous inhabitants of Saipan, but I saw little in the naval military government’s dealings with the Japanese civilians to demonstrate that the inculcation of democracy was part of its objective. True, it did install a Japanese administration in Area 3 to tend to day-to-day affairs of the civilians there, just as Charan Kanoa (Area 1) was under a Chamorro-Carolinian administration, and Area 2 was in the hands of Korean civilians. But all of this was in conformance with the mantra of military government that there should be turned over to enemy civilian nationals as much responsibility for their own affairs as was consistent with public policy and the best interests of all concerned.

The primary purpose of this policy was to minimize the effort required of the military government to maintain internment, devoid of any accompanying ideological premise. Many in the naval military government considered the Japanese civilians untrustworthy, and there was a reluctance in Saipan to free them from regulation in economic, social, and administrative matters. There was no attempt by the military government to structure democratic institutions into the govern-

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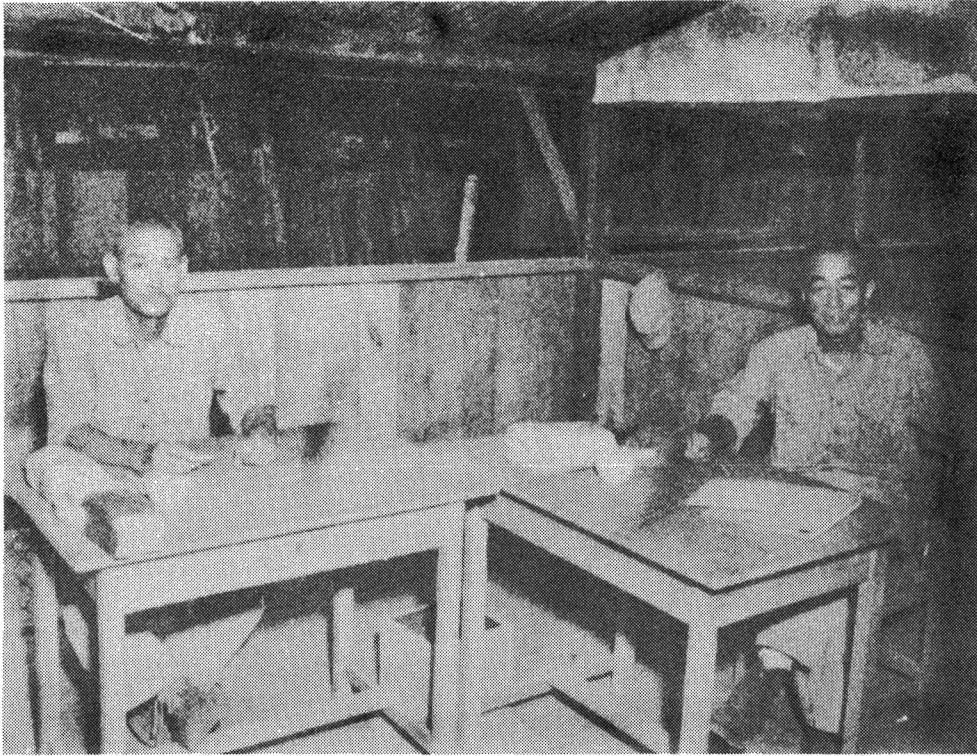
mental framework of Area 3, or to introduce the Japanese civilians to democratic processes. The Japanese administration in Area 3 could hardly be considered an expression of democratic self-government.

To head the Chamorro-Carolinian area, and perhaps provide some continuity, the naval military government first named a person who had previously been recognized by the prewar Japanese administration as the indigenous inhabitants' elected choice. On his death, rather than appointing a successor, the military government allowed all indigenous males over eighteen years of age to elect a new leader, and the same process was repeated on that person's demise. Similarly, the Koreans were permitted to name the administrative leader of Area 2. However, neither of these served as models for Area 3.

To head the Japanese administration in Camp Susupe, the naval military government appointed two individuals who had held important official posts under the previous Japanese rule, and showed no interest in introducing into Area 3 any element of popular selection of the Japanese leadership. Passing over the former mayor of Saipan's largest city, Garapan, reputedly because of his unpopularity among Japanese civilians, the military government designated Mr Toshimitsu Shoji as mayor and Mr Taro Yanagita to assist him as advisor. Prior to the war Shoji had occupied the second highest administrative post on Saipan as vice-mayor of Garapan. The elderly Yanagita previously had been district judge for the Marianas, holding a direct appointment from the Japanese emperor. For the most part the two served as co-mayors, meeting jointly with both civilians and military government officials, Shoji presiding and Yanagita seated alongside and occasionally interjecting some sage comment. Shoji supervised the half-dozen clerks at the administration's office.

Coming into camp, normally civilians clustered in small groups based on friendship, common village ties, and the happenstance of having sought shelter together while hiding in the hills. As sheltering buildings were erected, the mili-

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Mayor Toshimitsu Shoji (right) and his assistant, Mr Taro Yanagita in their office in the *yakuba*. (US Navy)

tary government would use these spontaneous groupings to assign one or more of them to a single barracks. There the occupants collectively would be called a *han*, each with its own *hancho* (group leader). The office did not play an important part in the governance of Area 3. While most group leaders appeared to have been informally designated through consensus, it was not a position eagerly sought. Primarily the leader served as the communication conduit for camp and *dantaicho*'s (section leaders') directions, and to him fell the unwelcome duties of chiding barracks occupants for failing to comply with existing requirements and acquainting them with those newly imposed.

A number of barracks buildings were organized into *dantai* (sections), and additional sections were added as the population of the camp grew. By the time I

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arrived on Saipan there were thirteen sections in the Japanese area, their numerical designation roughly identifying the order in which they had been established. Depending on the capacities of the buildings in a particular section, over a thousand persons might reside in its area. Subject to the approval of the naval military government, the Japanese administration appointed the head of each section. Assisting him was a nominal "advisor" who in most cases served as section clerk and collated the statistics required for internal camp reports. The major daily responsibility of the section head was to oversee his area's kitchen and its crew of workers. If necessary, to gain the attention of the people in his section he would bang on the empty shell case or steel rail hanging outside his office for that purpose.

Every two weeks the section leaders gathered around the long table on the porch of the administration's office to meet with the mayor and his advisor. Primarily these sessions served and were perceived as the means for naval military government orders and informational notices to be communicated to the section leaders and through them to the civilians in all sections. Little by way of collective policy formulation or what could be treated as the flexing of the sinews of self-government occurred at these periodic meetings. To the civilians of Area 3, the officials of the Japanese administration and the section heads appeared to be spokesmen for the naval military government, rather than representatives of the internees.

Sharply contrasting with Susupe, in Camp Churo on Tinian the naval military government allowed the internees to elect the leaders and their assistants in the Japanese and Korean areas. Provision was also made for camp councils composed of representatives initially chosen from the group leaders. In addition, the head of each administrative unit of the naval military government was directed to have a civilian assistant. All of this served to expose the Japanese internees on Tinian to democratic forms and processes. Since I was not posted to Tinian, I can

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only relate secondhand observations that reported life in Camp Churo to be less constraining, families afforded more privacy, and the Japanese civilian administration there exercising greater power over and concomitantly sharing responsibility for matters relating to camp governance and internee welfare.

Once the pattern of governance for Area 3 had firmed, the naval military government on Saipan had no plans for replicating the Tinian experience in Susupe. Buttressing this inertia of bureaucracy in retaining the status quo was the conviction that organized Japanese armed resistance persisted in the hills of Saipan. Notwithstanding that the island had long since been declared secured, periodic night sweeps by US Marines would occasionally flush out isolated enemy personnel. The body of a Japanese soldier, shot in ambush one night while attempting to raid the civilian farm, constituted my sole personal encounter with the killing aspect of warfare on Saipan. However, a full year and a half after D day, and almost four months after the war was over, Japanese Army Captain Sakae Oba marched out of the hills at the head of a band of 46 Japanese military, flag flying, and formally presented his sword in symbolic surrender of the island to the American forces. Given this confirmation of the continuance of organized enemy resistance, how much democracy could safely have been incorporated into the governance of Camp Susupe's Japanese civilians?

Maggie, and Coming in from the Hills

As I sat down for lunch at the officers' mess, Maggie hurried over to my table. Was it true that a new group of Japanese civilians had just walked out from the hills and were now being processed, this before they were assigned a place to live in Camp Susupe? Not knowing the answer, I assured her I would inquire, a reply that carried a double meaning.

Magdalena—for that was her given name—was one of the four Chamorro who waited on tables in the military government officers' mess. Although Americans in the team referred to them all as “girls,” Maggie's matronly figure and age clearly removed her from that category. Months before I had arrived on Saipan, her unfailing good humor and evident administrative abilities had placed her in charge of the others, even though her command of English was minimal. Consequently, as one of the language officers, when problems arose in the mess I would serve as interpreter, because like most Chamorros she spoke Japanese.

Before the war, Maggie had married a Japanese resident on Saipan, a *naichijin* (person from the Japanese home islands). With her two children she was living on the outskirts of Garapan, on the western side of the island, Saipan's major town and Japanese administrative headquarters for the Northern Marianas. By the fall of 1943 Japan had begun fortifying strategic places on its 72 square miles and expanding its military garrison. Anticipating an American invasion, some three months before D day the Japanese military had ordered all civilians out of Garapan, but allowed the Japanese living four miles to the south in the sugar town of Charan Kanoa to remain until American air surveillance began.

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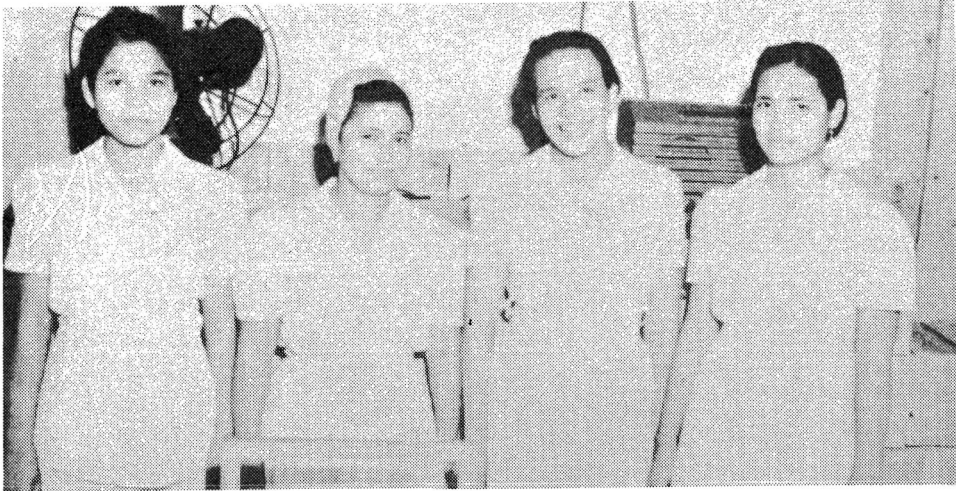


Civilians found hiding in a cave on Saipan. They were hungry, fearful, and dressed in what remained of the clothes they wore on the day they fled. (*US Navy*)

Civilians fled the urban areas for their farms and ranches, or took to the hills, but all were ill prepared to sustain themselves for long. Although Maggie had hurriedly left with her whole family, in the initial confusion and then the utter devastation of the military operation that followed, her husband had become separated. This could easily occur, for the Americans advanced first southerly and easterly from their initial landings near the Nan'yō Kōhatsu Kaisha's sugar mill at the outskirts of Charan Kanoa, and then pivoted and relentlessly moved northward. At the same time, the Japanese troops resolutely resisted as they retreated. Many civilians found themselves sandwiched between the two forces in the ill-defined line of battle.

For the trapped civilians there were only desperate alternatives. One was to continue fleeing and ultimately commit suicide, as many did by jumping over the perpendicular Banaderu cliffs at the northern edge of the island, the males to avoid anticipated slaughter at the hands of the American troops and the females to escape the fate of rape they believed awaited them. Others attempted to

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Chamorro waitresses in the military government's wardroom mess. Maggie is second from left. (*US Navy*)

conceal themselves in the caves that honeycombed the central limestone backbone of the island and hold out as the fighting surged passed them. Most surrendered to the inevitability of being overrun and turned themselves in to the American forces. Maggie with her children opted for the last, and had been placed in the temporary stockade set up by the marines for Chamorro and Carolinian civilians.

As a measure of the strength of her marriage vows, while the days stretched into weeks, and then into months, Maggie never lost faith that her husband was alive, hiding out in the "boondocks." As new people arrived in camp, she would hurry to inquire if they had any knowledge about him. At best she learned nothing that would serve to confirm her husband's death, but undaunted she continued to hope. After the stream of newcomers eventually slowed to a bare trickle, I tried to have the Camp Susupe's registration staff always include a query about Maggie's husband in the interviewing process that preceded admission. The responses were always negative. Some seventeen Japanese men who had married indigenous women before the war were eventually admitted to the Chamorro-Carolinian part of Camp Susupe after they returned with their

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families from the hills, and this probably buoyed Maggie's belief in her husband's eventual return.

The first civilians had started stumbling into the American lines within hours after the United States forces had gone ashore. It was essential that they be removed from anywhere near the combat area to ensure the success of the military operation. Their physical presence could not be permitted to interfere with the forward advance of the American forces, their communications, and transport of their supplies. Japanese soldiers masquerading as civilians must have no opportunity to infiltrate the American lines, and vigilance had to be continuously maintained against the threat of sabotage by civilians. In addition, the spread of disease to the combatant troops could only be prevented by furnishing medical care to civilians and seeing to their sanitary needs. For all of these practical reasons, apart from humanitarian concerns, stockades for civilians were quickly erected.

The Fourth Marine Division set up three civilian stockades in its crowded landing area. When the Twenty-seventh Army Division later came ashore, it did the same. Meanwhile the Second Marine Division erected a stockade for Japanese civilians on the beach and began work on a camp for Chamorros and Carolinians a little inland, between the sea and a nearby marsh-like area behind its lines known as Lake Susupe. Five days after the invasion began, all combat forces were directed to transfer the civilians in their stockades, regardless of ethnicity, to the Lake Susupe area. Thereafter, as the line of fighting moved up the island and other temporary holding areas for civilians were set up, their occupants, too, would soon be moved to Camp Susupe.

Preinvasion plans had called for using both Charan Kanoa and Garapan to shelter the civilians caught on the island by war. However, the air bombardment and naval shelling that had preceded the landings, and the fighting that engulfed Japanese-fortified Garapan as the American troops advanced, so devastated the

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town that little could be done other than bulldoze the rubble away. With the rehabilitation of the structures still standing in Charan Kanoa, and the building of wooden duplexes, the thirty-five hundred Chamorro and Carolinian survivors remaining on the island would eventually be housed there. In November, when they were transferred from the stockade, the crowded Japanese civilian internees overflowed into the hovels vacated. Lost on some of the Americans was the significant reversal in status of Japanese and indigenes that all this movement symbolized: before the war, not only could no Chamorro or Carolinian reside in Charan Kanoa, but it was a criminal offense for them to be caught after sunset in this exclusively Japanese area. Now they occupied the superior housing of Charan Kanoa, which was declared out of bounds to all Japanese, who, as inferiors, lived in relative squalor. The terminology adopted by the military government designated Charan Kanoa as Area 1 of Camp Susupe, notwithstanding its physical separation. Together with the far more populous Japanese compound, officially identified as Area 3, and the adjoining barracks housing one-tenth as many Koreans (Area 2), all three were integral parts of Camp Susupe's naval government administration.

In practice, based on the ethnicity of the civilians in question, the naval military government on Saipan observed differing policies of protective custody. The Japanese, whether from Japan or from Okinawa, were enemy aliens, with all the negative connotations that designation engendered, and were to be dealt with as such. Since the Koreans had been brought to Saipan to work on the sugar plantations from their homeland occupied by Japan, they were regarded as reluctant colonials, nationals of a state destined to be independent again someday. The Micronesians had for long been subservient under Spanish and then German rule, and most recently had suffered the administration of the Japanese under League of Nations Mandate. They were considered liberated peoples, the rightful inhabitants of Saipan, to be treated indulgently as unsophisticated and childlike,

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now unfortunately caught up in the vicissitudes of war. Shortly after the inception of military government these indigenous peoples were kept apart from the Japanese, and so were the Koreans. As a consequence, the attitudes of the military government personnel in the housing, feeding, and treatment of these three major groups differed in ways that mirrored the military government's ethnically distinctive containment policies.

The appalling conditions under which civilians at first lived when gathered in protective custody served to reinforce the attitudes of military government personnel. Hungry, thirsty, sick, some with untended wounds, and others traumatized by shock, they entered camp demoralized. In the early period as many as a thousand civilians a month died from malnutrition, wounds, and disease. Once beyond the stage of eating K rations, they cooked the food distributed to them over fires built with scavenged wood. Only gradually were temporary shelters improvised from GI and Japanese military tentage, tarpaulins, and ponchos before more substantial structures could be erected. Little wonder that seeing this squalor and human degradation, the mind-set of some of the military government personnel was to regard whatever was done by way of housing, sanitation, and care for the internees as being far better than what they were accustomed to—and for which they should be eternally grateful. As enemy aliens, the Japanese were considered to be in the poorest position from which to complain about the care received. In the parlance of the time, while all of the internees were “gooks,” they were at the bottom of the civilian heap, and to be treated accordingly.

As it most charitably can be described, the planning for the military government phase of the Saipan invasion proved inadequate. The officers and enlisted men assigned to the marine civil affairs detachment and the naval military government team were ill prepared for the tasks they faced. Recorded history reveals it was only at the intervention of the Pacific Ocean Area Command that several thousand tons of supplies for the relief of civilians had even been loaded, and they

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did not reach the naval military government team until very late. This tonnage included no shelter materials. Incongruously, not so delayed were the printed questionnaires, registration forms, and laborers' identifying armbands, which somehow were taken ashore on the first day! Many months later, when I joined the military government team, I could sense a residue of resentment among the unit members for whom improvisation necessarily had to be the order of the day as they faced the enormity of the problems raised when the moorings of an entire population are suddenly destroyed. I was told that in the initial fighting, civilians would infiltrate through the forward lines at night to abandon their infants to be cared for by the Americans and fade back into the boondocks. The next morning the team would find the infants. The first shelter built in the camp on Saipan was for orphans. According to the records, the day after the marines landed they found themselves with a thousand civilians who had appeared in their midst, all requiring some form of assistance; three weeks later the number of civilians interned had increased eightfold; and by 1 August, the naval military government was responsible for the care of some sixteen thousand civilians. The complexity of the needs demanding solution that confronted the naval government only grew as the number of interned civilians multiplied.

No transport had been assigned for military government use, and none allotted to it specifically was to arrive on Saipan until ten months after D day. The naval team's orders authorizing it to commandeer any Japanese equipment found proved meaningless. Most of the Japanese vehicles were inoperable due to the damage they had sustained, and the few that could run had been immediately seized by the marines, who were first on the ground. As one of the enlisted members of the military government team commented at the 1995 commemoration anniversary of Camp Susupe, "Who was going to argue with a US Marine driver in a Japanese truck pointing a rifle at you?" With whatever motor transport could be begged or borrowed from other units, and with the effort materially aug-

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mented by use of the bull carts that had been commonly used on the individual farms before the war, the team set to work moving back to the area of Camp Susupe anything that could possibly be used for feeding, sheltering, clothing, and otherwise meeting the needs of the internees. This foraging became ever more systematized as Japanese vehicles were repaired, and when supplemented by American transport. Tons of discovered supplies that had been stored by the Japanese military for the provisioning of their own troops were moved to the camp's supply yard. Civilian women riding on trucks with an American driver went out daily and returned to camp with salvaged vegetables growing on the prewar farms scattered over the island. Anything from Garapan and its environs that could possibly be used as building materials, or to make life in camp more tolerable, was similarly gleaned and trucked back to camp.

Meanwhile, civilians were called on to assist in the camp in many ways, such as serving as stretcher-bearers and nurses, and making up teams for burial duty. Internees prepared bandages and surgical dressings until sufficient medical supplies were delivered. Once beyond the temporary efforts at improvising shelter, all ethnic groups were set to work under the direction of army engineers and navy Seabees building single story barracks out of the salvaged materials. Japanese civilian surveyors laid out their location as the camp plan took form, as well as marking where wells were to be sunk, pit toilets dug, and cookhouses placed. The outlines of a small city emerged as the number of camp occupants swelled and additional facilities were added to house them.

Beyond attending to the most immediate needs of the civilians as they came into camp, it was considered essential for security that any Japanese military personnel among them masquerading as civilians be identified and separated out. Questioning by intelligence officers during this initial phase of the registration process, supplemented by the knowledge of Chamorros on staff of the Japanese civilians resident on the island before the war, sufficed to expose most impostors.

Maggie, and Coming in from the Hills

Nevertheless, until almost the end of the war, the occasional Japanese military man who had succeeded in slipping through the screening was disclosed as living in Susupe and sent to the army's distant prisoner-of-war camp. Despite the aura of punishment that reference to incarceration immediately conjures, ironically the members of the Japanese armed forces as prisoners of war received better treatment, whether food, housing, or the rate of pay for work performed, than did the civilians in Camp Susupe. International law clearly defined the minimum standards to be observed for captured military personnel, but no comparable norms of clarity were applicable to civilians. In general, Camp Susupe needed only to observe the more ambiguous constraint raised by the general requirement that humane treatment be furnished.

The registration procedures institutionalized in Camp Susupe served to provide a complete personal record for each internee, replete with photograph and thumbprint. From these were later issued identification papers, which the internees were to carry at all times under pain of punishment. Once the barracks were erected, each internee was assigned to a building in which to live, and unauthorized transfer subjected the internee to arrest and court trial. Questioning during registration permitted recordation of each internee's education, prior work experience, and potentially useful skills, all of which facilitated the assignment of everyone of employable age to an appropriate job, whether inside or beyond the boundary fences of Camp Susupe.

The process of registration of all civilians resident in the camp was an unending chore. Initially, at the time of maximum internee intake, only minimal, temporary records could be made, so that the internees had to be summoned back for reinterview and completion of the full, formal dossier. Births in camp and the continued dribble of new entrants coming in from the hills contributed to an ever-growing number of registration files; approved changes of residence, marriages formalized in camp, and deaths had to be recorded; and there were

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always new data to be added, as for immunizations. As a result, even when World War II ended, the registration of all internees in the formal camp records had not been fully finalized. By that time it was a common joke among staff that due to rotation of military government personnel to assignments off-island, no one was left on the team who could read the fingerprints so laboriously amassed, should the need for matching them ever arise.

The battle lines moved closer to the northern tip of the island, and two days after the last desperate *banzai* charge of the Japanese military, on 7 July, the island was declared "secured." Officers in Army Intelligence moved with the American forces, including Americans of Japanese ancestry who spoke Japanese and several of the language officers detailed to the naval military government.* Their role was to urge civilians hiding in the hills to surrender. Attempts were made to dissuade remaining Japanese military from detaining them, so that they could "come in." Under the circumstances, this constituted a very dangerous assignment. Their handheld, portable bullhorns, and the heavier equipment with loudspeakers mounted on jeeps, exposed their positions to sniper fire. Then, too, Japanese military concealed among groups of surrendering civilians always constituted a threat. While considerable success was achieved in encouraging civilians to turn themselves in, a number held out and straggled in over the following months as subsistence in the hills became ever more difficult.

After most of the civilians remaining alive on Saipan were interned in Susupe, and had settled down to the routine of camp life, it was possible to literally sense the presence of each new arrival. For one thing, a smelly aura

*US policy did not countenance Americans of Japanese ancestry serving in the navy. I had experienced the myopia of this policy when I brought a contingent of army enlisted Americans of Japanese ancestry to Saipan from Honolulu at the end of 1944 for service in the military government. Special permission had to be obtained to pass them through the Pearl Harbor gates and over to the seaplane base. Although they were not trained language interpreters, their oral competence in Japanese enabled them to conduct classes in the camp schools and materially implement various other camp administrative functions.

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enveloped them. They had hidden out for many months in dank, dark caves. Short of catching rain, they had little water to drink, let alone to bathe or wash their clothes, which, after their original clothing wore out, normally consisted of ill-matched garments expropriated from the bodies of the dead. As part of this garb consisted of salvaged Japanese uniforms, it also carried the risk of their being shot by the US Marines on their periodic night patrols, mistaking them for Japanese military also remaining in the hills. Even after they bathed and were issued new clothing, the new arrivals remained visually distinct from those already in camp. Having long become night people who emerged to search for food only after the sun had set, their skins had turned pasty white, giving them the appearance of walking ghosts. Indeed, until fully adapted to camp ways, in their unfamiliarity with established camp routines they kept themselves apart, like people from another world.

With the war over, the civilians interned in Camp Susupe responded to the announcement of the Japanese surrender in a variety of ways. One visitor to the camp told how Maggie cried when she heard the news and remarked that she wanted to go to Japan with her children to live with her husband's parents. Although this information was recounted as a display of Maggie's grief linked to Japan's defeat, I interpreted it quite differently. Finally, at long last, Maggie had to face the cruel reality that her husband was never coming in from the hills. (Many years later I was told by a Chamorro informant that Maggie had remarried, and with her American husband had moved to California—but I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this conclusion to her story.)

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The invasion of Saipan introduced the civilians on the island to American law, albeit in a form embodied in military orders and normally enforced peremptorily by military personnel. For some of the indigenes this was the fourth time in their own lifetimes that they had to become familiar with a new system of law. First Germany succeeded Spain, and then with World War I was replaced by Japan. Unlike the American legal system, with its common law underpinnings, all of the others were code based, but to the civilians interned in Camp Susupe this made little difference. To them, American law seemed to consist of nothing but a bewildering array of dos and don'ts, which they failed to observe at their own peril. Some of the orders were reduced to writing and translated into Japanese, but probably few civilians ever more than glanced at them. Rather, most orders with which they were conversant had been orally communicated by military personnel or relayed to them by other internees, probably in garbled form. Only as the days of living within the confines of the camp's barbed wire stretched into weeks and then months did the internees come to identify the orders that the military government had initially issued as safeguards to cover all contingencies and had then slowly relaxed as it found them unnecessary. Many such orders came to be enforced mainly in the breach. Similarly, the civilians gradually invented a myriad of ways to attempt to circumvent those proscriptions that were observed. Only if they became caught up in the legal process, as when formally charged with violation of some order, did they have occasion to experience how the American system of law extended beyond mere literal reading of an order's text, and could expand exponentially out of precedent. They also learned that the

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American system did not countenance enforcement by obtaining confessions through duress, knowledge that was reinforced by cases brought before the military government's provost court against civilian policemen from the Korean area.

In anticipation of the landings on Saipan, a series of proclamations had been prepared under the name of Admiral Chester Nimitz, and once the fighting permitted, these were prominently posted. Proclamation No. 1 declared that the admiral had assumed full powers of government over the Mariana Islands and ordered prompt obedience of all orders. It was followed by Proclamation No. 2 on war crimes, starting with a list of offenses punishable by death, and then a longer array subjecting offenders to fines and imprisonment. Eventually nine proclamations were issued, on such subjects as courts, Japanese money and the closing of financial institutions, narcotics, seizure of property, and a wide gamut of police and security regulations on meetings, publications, radios, photography, and intoxicating liquors. All of these were supplemented by Island Command orders, Camp Susupe general orders, and specific orders (both oral and written) issued thereunder by military government personnel. The Nimitz proclamations suspended all powers of the Japanese empire, but incidentally also declared that violations of Japanese penal law in effect prior to the occupation could be brought to trial before American military courts. This last, with its reference to Japanese penal law, was to suggest an avenue by which I would later handle a dilemma.

Once military guards were replaced by civilian police forces, in addition to guarding the entire periphery of the camp, the Chamorros and Carolinians trained by the army military police also served as the internal police for Charan Kanoa, the Area 1 of Camp Susupe. For the rest of the camp, the Japanese and Korean police forces patrolled their respective areas and in general ensured compliance with camp rules, enforcing the observance of sanitation regulations, stopping the display of lights after dark, catching thieves, preventing gambling, breaking up

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physical disturbances, and otherwise maintaining peace and order. While American military personnel were prohibited from entering any of the three areas of the camp without permission, the Japanese and Korean police discovering the presence of an intruder could only raise an alarm to summon the external guards and were under strict orders not to lay hands on any American. Any GI so apprehended within the camp was charged and tried before the military court having jurisdiction over his unit, and not before the camp's provost court.

On occasion I would visit the military government legal office outside the main gate of the Japanese compound to observe the trial of civilians by the summary court for violation of some military order. Formal charges would have been sworn to by the public safety officer, who received his information from the arresting policeman, and would then be heard by the legal officer serving as judge. Previously the court had been held in the Japanese Police Headquarters, since by virtue of Area 3's predominant size, most cases involved Japanese civilians. After the venue was changed, on days of holding court, policemen escorted the arrested defendants out through the camp gate and into the legal office, and they remained in a small dock in one corner until, seriatim, they were called before the desk of the judge. Each was advised of the offense with which he was charged, including a reference to the section of the specific order violated. The public safety officer served as prosecutor. Routinely counsel was waived and practically always the civilian pleaded guilty. Rarely was any evidence introduced.

In their barest essence, the court proceedings were not much different from those observable before countless justice of the peace courts in the United States, where persons charged admit guilt and throw themselves on the mercy of the court. But on Saipan the process was both far slower, as everything had to be translated between English and another language—the defendants might be Carolinian, Chamorro, Japanese, or Korean—and the punishment meted out was

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apt to be severe. A civilian's failure to observe the enforced proscriptions of the military law was treated as a challenge to be summarily punished. To do otherwise might be mistaken for weakness and lead to more egregious flaunting of military authority.

A great number of the cases brought before Camp Susupe's summary court involved internees trying to smuggle goods—food, candy, cigarettes, linens, nails, almost anything—into camp and being caught in the act. Initially, early after the invasion, everything scrounged by civilians permitted outside camp was distributed among all those interned or, particularly as to foods, stored for later use. An individual's securing undue benefit was thereby foreclosed. Later, the justification for banning internees from bringing anything into camp rested on reasons of security and discouraging the theft of American governmental and GI personal property from the areas where civilians were assigned to work. For attempting to smuggle into camp four packages of gum worth twenty cents, concealed in his leggings, Kana Oshiro was sentenced to hard labor for thirty days, a punishment Akamine Koshin also suffered for hiding in his shoes two pieces of candy, approximate value two cents.

Since all civilians in Area 3 returned to camp through a gate guarded by Chamorro and Carolinian policemen, which subjected them to at least individual scrutiny and frequently included a brusquely administered body search, to avoid being caught with illicit goods some civilians resorted to throwing contraband over the camp fence while riding on a truck when returning from work. Another ploy was to conceal goods outside the camp's perimeter, but close to the fence, and retrieve them surreptitiously through the strands of barbed wire after entering camp.

Identification cards and red-cloth labor strips issued to all workers enabled maintenance of labor records and distinguished camp internees from persons still remaining in the hills. Losing either subjected civilians to court-ordered punish-

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ment. Even when voluntarily reported when seeking a replacement, the loss brought the imposition of a fine, although sometimes it was suspended at the discretion of the judge.

All fraternization between internees and military personnel was peremptorily prohibited. That it was nevertheless frequently occurring was evidenced by the detected unsuccessful attempts to bring back the gifts civilians had received or their purchases from GIs of cigarettes and other desired articles not readily available in camp. The summary court judge tended to respond to all such interactions as deliberate affronts to the military government. It alone, as distinguished from all other military units on the island, had right of control over the civilians and their contact with Americans on the island. While the judge had no jurisdiction over the GIs who were parties to the fraternization, if indeed they could even be identified, he appeared determined to punish any civilian who had the temerity to violate the nonfraternization order.

Proceedings of the summary court for Susupe were posted on the public bulletin boards and in the camp newspaper—the *Marianas Hiho*—complete with name of the internee, statement of charge, court finding, and court sentence. Almost all prisoners ordered confined were placed in the camp's central jail, and there received the regular food ration of two meals a day. For sentences over six months at hard labor, confinement was in the army's distant prisoner-of-war stockade. It was normal to order all males found guilty to be confined at hard labor, but the work to which they were assigned belies the image such designation conjures of a sweating chain gang condemned to rock-splitting labor under a tropic sun. A more accurate picture is conveyed by one of the cases brought before the summary court of several jailed civilians who were charged with concealing themselves and sleeping for several hours while on a work gang detailed to duty outside the jail. Given the depressing conditions under which the average Japanese civilian lived in camp, except for being deprived of the social freedom

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enjoyed by nonincarcerated civilians, as well as the opportunity to obtain a third meal when working for another military unit, apparently the internees did not consider the court-ordered jail stay an onerous punishment. In a number of cases, probably, of greater moment was the loss of face among one's peers for having been unsuccessful in outwitting the guards when attempting to sneak contraband into camp. And unquestionably conviction by the court of an act considered nefarious by the civilians in camp subjected the person jailed to serious social opprobrium.

After I had settled into the routine of facilitating the day-to-day functioning of the Japanese area, I gradually became aware of various minor camp orders and restrictions applicable to the internees whose justification had long since lapsed. Even if not enforced, however, given the very nature of military government, the civilians ignored them at their own risk. In many cases the origins of these orders could be traced back to situations that no longer existed, but although the rationale for their imposition no longer held, no effort had been made to expunge them from the camp's lists of dos and don'ts. A good illustration was the prohibition against the ringing of bells in Area 3 before 0800. Its genesis lay in the early period of the camp when the quarters of the military government's commanding officer were located close by the Japanese area, and his sleep was disturbed by the ritual clanging of gongs for early Buddhist worship. Once the colonel moved into the separate house erected for him on the beach some distance away from the camp, the need for this order aimed at securing his comfort had ended. Nevertheless the banning persisted and continued to place a damper on religious services in camp.

I recognized that an order initially intended to achieve one objective might accrete other values, so that the lapsing of its original justification did not necessarily dictate that it be expunged. The rule of thumb I applied in identification for effectively cancelling those orders whose original *raison d'être* had eroded was to

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consider the nature of the proscribed activity. As a lawyer I was familiar with the distinction in criminal law between acts considered *malum in sei* (inherently bad) and those treated as *malum prohibitum* (merely prohibited by law). Murder well illustrates the first, leaving one's car beyond the permitted parking period the second. Almost all of the camp prohibitions that appeared to have outlived their justification fell within the second class and could safely be eliminated. This rationale—from the perspective of time, probably more aptly phrased as rationalization—did not as neatly fit the problem faced when the Island Command one day decided to imitate God, and hurl one of the Ten Commandments onto the camp.

As once long ago proclaimed from Mt Sinai, but now in the form of an order emanating from Island Command high on the side of Mt Tapotchau (near the center of the island), and relayed through the military government command, it was declared: "There shall be no adultery in Camp Susupe." Via the grapevine I was made to understand that this was aimed at the Japanese area, where it was rumored that civilians were "living in sin." Apparently a highly placed visitor to the area had indignantly complained to Island Command that Japanese men and women were cohabiting without being married to each other. I did not have the least idea how many men or women might be living together, and who among them were not married, let alone mutually married. Given the expressions of dismay communicated to me by the internal Japanese administrators when I acquainted them with the issuance of the order, I concluded that the numbers affected were not minuscule.

Well might they be large. Not only had whole families been ripped apart by the invasion, with one of the spouses killed, but before the Americans had landed on Saipan some women had been sent back to Japan with their children, leaving their husbands on the island. The severance of all communications with the homeland made it impossible to learn whether any of these wives in Japan had survived the American air attacks and were still alive. Meanwhile on Saipan,

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living crowded together in cramped quarters and subject to the nightly curfew that kept all close to their assigned barracks in the unlighted camp, it was to be expected that sexual liaisons would occur over time, irrespective of the marital status of either of the partners. Should a man and a woman live together and comport themselves as appropriate for a married couple, with the woman performing such household tasks as attending to laundry chores and mending, while the male as provider scrounged for needed articles and maintained a pile of firewood for brewing tea, the sharing of tasks would materially contribute to the maintenance of orderly camp life. The *Marianas Hiho*—the camp newspaper—occasionally carried articles on the names of persons being married and where they were going on their honeymoon, the place designated being the building to which they were being assigned to live as a married couple. This only served as evidence that internment in camp, discouraging as conditions might be, did not foreclose romance.

From camp records it could have been ascertained whether an adult civilian had declared married status at the time of registration. Although this information was supposed to be routinely obtained, in part to facilitate the housing of families, such notation of itself would have been insufficient to identify the adulterers in the camp. To accomplish this, systematic investigation would have to be undertaken, with barracks-to-barracks inquiry launched. Was a missing spouse dead, still hiding out in the hills, or alive in Japan? It might also be detected from the tone of this account that I was not particularly sympathetic to initiating drastic action designed to sever the various linkages that might have formed between men and women and made life for them in Camp Susupe a little more tolerable. On the rare occasion when a Japanese military man masquerading as a civilian had been discovered in camp “shacked up” with a civilian woman, and was ordered removed to the prisoner-of-war stockade, I was painfully aware of the interned woman’s grief, particularly when she was pregnant and concerned

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with maintaining ties for the benefit of the expected child.

When the press of my duties permitted, over time I had engaged in discussions with the former Japanese District Judge Taro Yanagita, about Japanese code law and how it had been applied before the war. Within the camp the judge now served as a senior advisor to the mayor of the Japanese area. From these talks I was acquainted with the subordinate role Japanese law afforded the woman, and that what was considered "adultery" for a woman did not apply equally to a man: a married woman committed punishable adultery when she engaged in consensual intercourse with a man to whom she was not legally married, but not the converse with respect to a married man. Indeed, male infidelity apparently did not furnish justifiable grounds for legal separation or divorce of spouses.

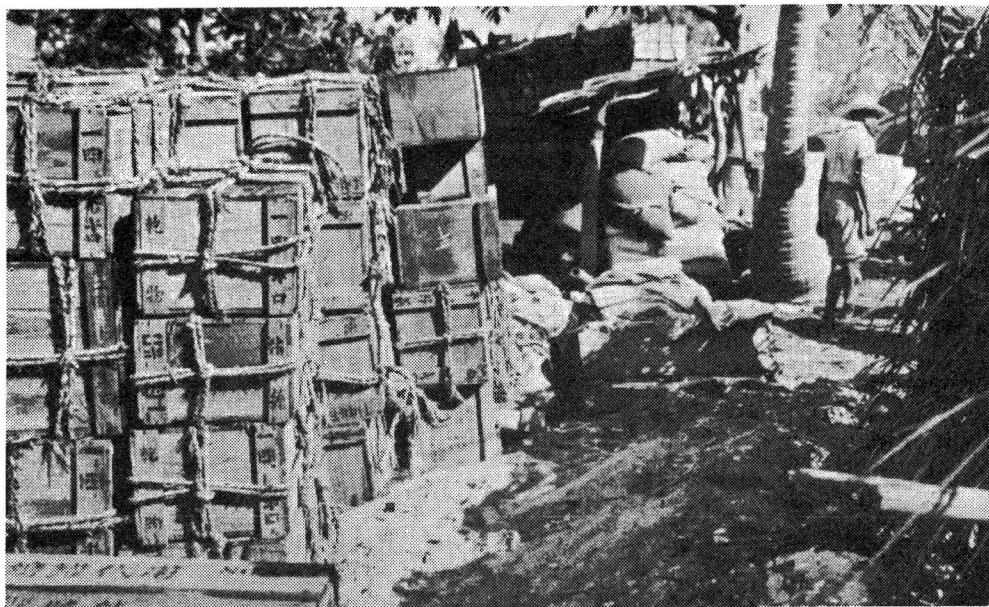
Although probably not anticipated, the original Nimitz proclamations providing for prosecuting preinvasion offenses before American military courts were broad enough to include the Japanese crime of adultery, despite the sex-biased skewing inherent in Japanese law. This was *kantsu*, and in my dictionaries in English was defined simply as "adultery." All I had to do was follow the instructions I had received and literally translate into Japanese for Area 3 the order: "There shall be no adultery in Camp Susupe." This automatically eliminated half of the problem raised by excluding all men. As for the married women in camp, the Japanese administrators opined that they would not engage in any conduct that was not countenanced by Japanese mores or prohibited by the former Japanese law. And since while I was on Saipan no charge of adultery being committed in the Japanese compound was ever brought before the provost court, perhaps they were right.

Food

One of the physical mementos I brought back from Saipan, and kept for a number of years before discarding everything but the memories of Camp Susupe, was a photograph of two metal plates. Centered on each, as I recall, was a scoop of rice flanked on one by a serving of vegetables stewed with meat and on the other by a small piece of canned meat. Accompanying each plate was a salvaged C ration can filled with soup. They fairly represented the typical total food ration daily issued in camp to a non-worker. The pictures were taken by the naval military photographer and accompanied my report on the food problem in Susupe to the military government commander. When I arrived on Saipan I found that the major disgruntlement of the Japanese internees was centered around food, and subsequently, little that was done to alleviate it seemed to make much difference.

In the first few days of the fighting, the military's ubiquitous K rations were fed to the starving refugees, and drinking water was doled out to them from drums said to have been brought from Hawai'i. Only about two hundred tons of the food loaded for the military government—rice, corned beef, and canned salmon—were landed on Saipan during the early combat period, and these were not opened until a full three months after D day! Meanwhile, to supplement and then replace the GI ready rations, edible vegetables found growing on the scattered farm plots were used to feed the internees, along with salvaged kegs of pickled plums, cases of canned fish, straw-sacked rice, and other foodstuffs that had been stockpiled on the island for use by the Japanese military. Eventually, some twenty-five hundred tons of these enemy food stores were diverted to

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Food stores stockpiled by the Japanese were used to feed the internees. *(US Navy)*

civilian consumption, probably exceeding in weight all of the rations loaded on US ships and brought to Saipan for the same purpose. Not only did they initially contribute substantially to keeping the civilians alive, but until the carefully doled out supply of captured soy sauce and other condiments ran low, they literally provided the spice of camp life. During the fighting, considerably more Japanese military stores had been discovered and could have been so diverted for camp use if they had not been wantonly destroyed by the American military or allowed to rot through exposure to the elements. The GIs had come ashore on Saipan after being warned to avoid drinking all local water because it had been poisoned by the Japanese; it was but a logical extension for the Americans to equate the odor of the unfamiliar foodstuffs with a comparable danger.

Prior to the invasion of the Pacific, the navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery established a minimum daily diet of 1,530 calories for civilians. It was admittedly insufficient to provide all the nutrient elements necessary, but was designed to prevent starvation and reduce disease. Later, on Saipan, this mini-

mum was increased to 1,824 calories, and dry stores were supplemented with vegetables from the camp's cooperatives and much later with fish caught by the camp's sampans. Civilians performing heavy labor were fed increased diets, and all working outside the camp for other military units received an extra meal from them, normally in the form of C or K rations.

As demonstrated by the picture I had taken, what may have been judged adequate in calories by the medics did not necessarily correspond with what the civilians' stomachs told them was satisfying. Accustomed to a diet of rice and vegetables, and only minimal amounts of meat or fish, the internees were now receiving small amounts of concentrated foods without the normal accompanying bulk. Cumulatively, both meals consisted of about one to one-and-a-third pounds of food per day. Further disturbing the internees, once the supply of captured Japanese rice dwindled, the imported rice shipments failed to keep up with camp needs, and the Supply Department frequently distributed beans as a supplement to or substitute for rice. The limited supply of Japanese condiments available to the cooks for seasoning the food, as well as the institutional manner in which that food was cooked and distributed, also contributed to the dissatisfaction. In Area 1, raw food was allotted to each indigenous family group and then prepared by them according to their taste. But in Areas 2 (Korean) and 3 (Japanese), for sanitary reasons, workers from the various *suijiba* (cookhouses) picked up the food daily from the Supply Department and cooked it communally before dividing it up and distributing it to each *shik'sha* (barracks) according to the number of civilians it housed. Only late in the life of Camp Susupe were makeshift fireplaces appearing in Area 3 to prepare individual meals.

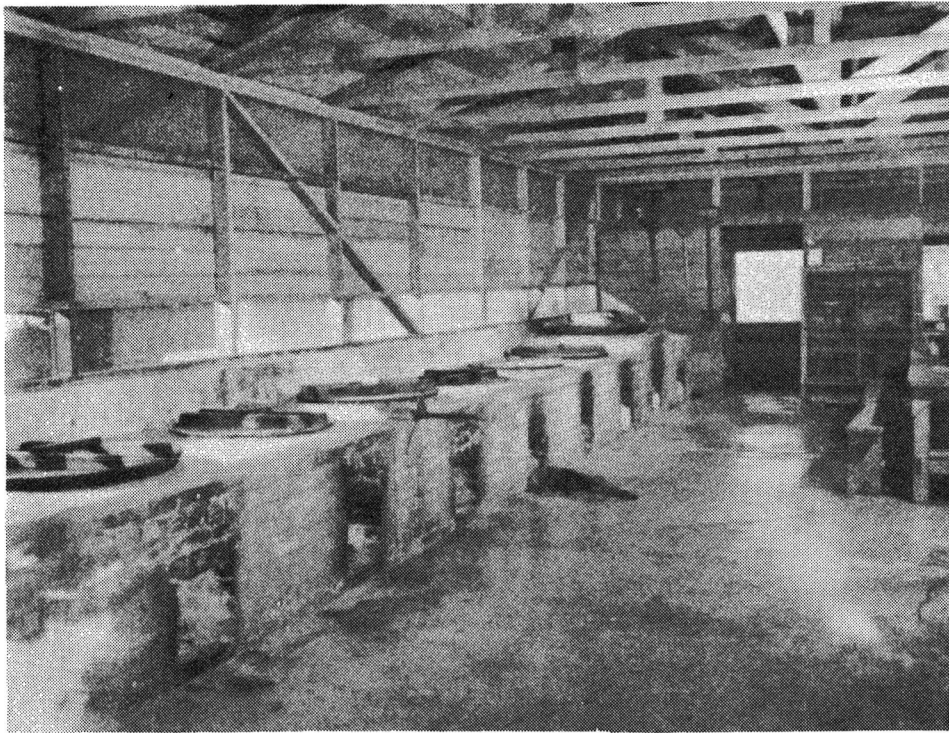
The sheer size of the refugee tide necessitated mass methods of feeding, once the civilians were weaned off temporary rations. Not only were prewar cooking facilities destroyed, but most cooking utensils as well as dishes and cutlery were trashed or buried in the rubble. Initially large breadfruit leaves

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served as plates for some civilians, and the cans that had held GI rations were put to use for drinking soup and tea. As Camp Susupe took shape, provision was made in each *dantai* (section) in Area 3 for a *suijiba* where crews could work under the supervision of the chief cook. Each *suijiba* housed a row of gigantic iron caldrons, in shape similar to those open-mouthed pots once found on old whaling ships and used to render the blubber of the oceans' behemoths, salvaged from the destroyed Japanese sugar mill where they had been employed to crystallize sugar from the juice of crushed sugarcane.

Early each morning, before anyone else in camp stirred, the kitchen crews were up, lighting the fires under the caldrons cradled in their holding platforms made from scrounged bricks, and boiling the rice and other foods destined for the first meal of the day. Without any form of refrigeration, all unprepared foods had to be distributed and consumed on the day of preparation. One of the jobs of the crews was to haul the necessary firewood from the pile maintained on the side of the camp to the *suijiba*, and there break it up into kindling that would be stock-piled for later use. The first few *suijiba* built were cramped, and the crews would necessarily perform part of their culinary duties, such as cleaning and chopping vegetables, on tables outside under the shelter of an overhanging roof or tree. This practice also allowed them to escape the heat of the cooking fires, which in the afternoons of Saipan's hot, humid days became near intolerable. With the building of more commodious, screened kitchens, for reasons of sanitation the handling of all foods was moved inside as much as possible. Most of the members of the *suijiba* crews were women, and numbered as many as eighteen. The *yakuba* selected the chief cook of each *suijiba* for his culinary skills and administrative competence on the recommendation of the *dantaicho* (section chief); I do not recall any woman serving in the capacity of chief cook, although it was obvious that some women were directing the observance of the daily minutiae.

Crucial to the Japanese diet are both *miso* and soy, the former a fermented



A communal kitchen in the new Ku. (US Navy)

rice paste and the latter a sauce made with soy beans. *Miso shiyo* (a *miso*-based soup to which shavings of *katsuobushi* [smoked bonito] are added) is an important part of a Japanese meal, and the camp cooks attempted to observe this tradition. Fortunately large supplies of soy sauce and *miso* were among the stores stockpiled by the Japanese military and were used to good advantage by the cooks. So, too, were their split bamboo containers, which were carefully husbanded and repeatedly used for delivering food to the individual *shik'sha* and to store foods in the *suijiba*, as for the making of *suimono* (Japanese-style, salted pickles) out of surplus vegetables delivered from the farm. When the salvaged Japanese supplies began to dwindle, green rice “starters” were obtained from the naval military government on Tinian, which by then was producing its own *miso* for interned civilians there. Susupe then succeeded in fermenting enough *miso* to

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otherwise destined to be delivered to the camp, cooked, and rationed out for individual servings was diverted, but the *miso* so consumed was included in the Supply Department's computation of daily caloric intake.

Close to fifteen tons of sweet potatoes, yams, taro, breadfruit, eggplant, and onions were garnered for the feeding of civilians in the first month following the invasion. Even more vegetables were obtained in the next few months, but by November this source had begun to drop markedly. Meanwhile, efforts were underway to have the internees grow their own produce. Some 140 families, each consisting of about five individuals, were formed into two farm cooperatives, one for Chamorros and Carolinians from Area 1 and the other, far larger, for Japanese from Area 3. Impounded Japanese equipment was divided between the farmers, and the navy supplied additional tools and seeds. Bulls pulled small plows to till the soil and bull carts moved the produce to the Co-op Headquarters. Under military government supervision, the cooperatives chose their own officers, set production targets for members, and provided technical assistance in growing unfamiliar crops. The military government regarded the manner in which the cooperatives conducted their own affairs as an introduction of the internees to democratic government.

The land used for the cooperative farms was considered to be property of the Japanese government and therefore available to the military government. As an indication of its fertility, it produced four truck crops a year. Each family initially received a 2½-acre (1 hectare) allotment of land, on which it usually threw together a ramshackle shelter for protection from passing rain showers or the heat of the noonday sun. By the end of the war the two cooperatives were farming 500 acres, the little individual plots identifiable from a distance by their varying shades of green and brown, all grouped together on the rising land situated behind the camp at the base of Mt Tapotchau. Besides fertility, the congruence of plot boundaries and the distance from camp determined the area

incorporated, as security was furnished the civilians—against both American GIs during the day, and Japanese military hiding in the hills and bent on looting the farms at night. Each day the internees walked to and from their farms, escorted by military police guards, a trek of half an hour or so each way.

The naval military government contracted to buy on a per-pound basis all fruits and vegetables produced by the two cooperatives, and the proceeds were distributed to members according to their respective contributions. Pumpkins, squash, lotus root, sweet potatoes, soy beans, eggplant, various leafy vegetables, and bananas materially added to the bulk of the produce going into the camp. Together with whatever could still be salvaged elsewhere, by the end of the war the total amount was over two hundred tons a month. But the cooperatives were also producing such “exotica” as tomatoes and sweet corn, some of which contributed to the reputation gained by the military government messes of being the best on the island. With access to these farm products, the naval military government obtained an added bonanza: Its “gift” of a few sacks of fresh corn or crates of ripe tomatoes could accomplish miracles in securing parts otherwise unavailable on the island for the repair of camp equipment, or for obtaining the specialized services of a technician loaned by a US naval vessel long out in the Pacific and now visiting Saipan with a crew hungry for the taste of fresh produce.

With Saipan overrun by the American military, the naval military government assumed responsibility not only for all civilians but also for all farm and draft animals delivered into its care. They grew into a small herd of runty cows and bulls, some goats of either sex, and a motley collection of chickens, ducks, and geese. The birds were cared for on the farm, and meals in the officers’ mess sometimes included eggs prepared in various styles, which I assume originated on the farm. However, I do not recall ever eating chicken or duck, irrespective of source.

Very occasionally, when the herd became too large, I would be asked to

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serve as interpreter for an army veterinarian who would examine the animals singled out for slaughter, and later their carcasses, for signs of disease. He had to be there to witness the killing, for once an animal was despatched and its meat certified, because of the lack of refrigeration the quartered carcasses were quickly sent to the *suijiba* to be cooked. The fresh meat was a welcome variation from the normal diet of canned, mostly processed meats. My memory of this distasteful duty is leavened by the knowledge that the act of slaughtering was the responsibility of the farm, not myself, for while the deaths of the cows and bulls were relatively quick and merciful, some of the old goats tenaciously clung to life, refusing to die until repeatedly beaten over the head.

The immediate trauma of the invasion had long been spent by the time I arrived on Saipan, and to my untrained eye the internees appeared physically fit whether workers in groups checking out to board the trucks taking them to work, boisterous children on their way to school, or families strung out in a long, meandering line on their trek to the Japanese cooperative farm. The navy doctors attending them assured me of the adequacy of the internees' diet, and dismissed their complaints as mere griping. The same reaction was shared generally by the other officers in the military government team, who voiced a number of explanations for the dissatisfaction. For one, inefficiency in the camp's distribution system was held to result in food being wasted or not evenly divided; even worse, deliberate favoritism resulted in the diets of some internees suffering. Another explanation had some of the food being secretly sent to the Japanese military still hiding in the hills; although sufficient food was going to the camp, the internees were denying themselves in order to further their own military's resistance. To prevent such activity, camp rules prohibited any food being left in the farm kitchens or small shelters on the cooperative farm, and required that everything taken there for meals be consumed or returned to camp. Underpinning all of these explanations was a general attitude of dismissal, for after all it was only a

matter involving the dissatisfaction of “gooks,” most of whom were probably eating better than they ever did before the war. I might inquire into the adequacy of food in camp, but I was acutely aware of not overstepping the fine line that would have me appear to be coddling “gooks” and have the epithet “Jap lover” affixed to me.

The Supply Department furnished monthly summary reports on the amount of food going into camp, which the internees questioned. Lacking were details on the food received by the various *dantai*. Enlisting the cooperation of the camp’s Japanese administration, I set out to remedy this hiatus by having each *suijiba* record daily the poundage and varieties of the foodstuffs delivered. After a few experimental attempts at drafting a form suitable to record almost all of the foodstuffs that might be distributed—this was long before the era of the computer-developed spreadsheet—a single-sheet report was duplicated and distributed to all *suijiba*. Meanwhile, to serve as measuring devices, the Japanese administration fashioned simple balancing-pan scales out of salvaged scrap metal, so that the workers in each *suijiba* could weigh and record the daily food distribution. These reports served a triple function: for me, as summarized from all the reports, they provided a rough measure of each day’s food receipts and also the ability to check on any glaring discrepancies in the normal flow of food into camp. With respect to the charge that food dissatisfaction in camp was due to maldistribution in Area 3, there was now a functioning system that tracked all food from the Supply Department to the *suijiba*. Probably of equal importance, since a copy of each report was also prominently displayed at the *suijiba*, the civilians fed by a particular kitchen could find out what foods were received that day and could be expected to raise objections should they not appear in what was allotted to them.

The system of routine, repetitive reporting seemed to fit well with administrative patterns familiar to the Japanese. Insofar as inquiry could determine, the

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kitchen workers were conscientiously carrying out their reporting duties. They appeared to welcome the opportunity afforded by the reports to demonstrate that they were not responsible for the minimal size or disapproved content of the internees' food ration. In short, after a few glitches were removed, the system worked as intended. In fact, too well. My office soon became deluged with daily food reports, and as most of the chore of handling the paper flow fell on me, eventually spot checking superseded any attempt to maintain an ongoing, comprehensive review.

When I became Japanese area commander I found myself expected to participate in a number of activities that had become institutionalized as part of camp life. One was a formal *suijiba* inspection each month. Early on the appointed day, the chief officers of the *yakuba* would call at my office, and we would all then proceed in a long line, I at the head, the mayor accompanied by his senior advisor following, and a retinue of *yakuba* clerks bringing up the tail. All that was missing to complete the comic opera appearance was a brace of drummers or trumpeters heralding our passage. The function of the clerks was to record everything commented on. I found it easier to conform to what the Japanese considered to be the proper role of the area commander than to invent a new one.

At each *suijiba* we were met by the *dantaicho*, his clerk, the *suiji-cho* (chief cook), and behind them the *suijiba* workers. For the occasion the clothes the kitchen crews wore were demonstrably cleaner, even if somewhat nondescript. After being welcomed, the procession would thread its way through the *suijiba*. In anticipation, both it and the grounds outside had been swept clean, all utensils inside orderly stored, and all cooked and opened canned food placed in covered containers. It was expected that I would open the doors in at least one of the kitchen cabinets to observe how carefully and neatly its contents had been arranged. If the cleaning were not thorough, scraps of food found left around, chopped firewood piled haphazardly, or anything else untoward discovered, all

was dutifully noted by the clerks. They would later revisit the *suijiba* to prepare a follow-up report. Since the sanitation crews maintained by the camp hospital routinely checked all *suijiba*, as well as the health of the kitchen workers, and would certainly order unsanitary conditions ameliorated, I rather sensed that officialdom in the *yakuba* looked on these periodic visits as one of the means for exercising administrative control over camp life. Meanwhile, a *suijiba* found wanting in a formal investigation—one ordered not by the *yakuba* but by the naval military government—afforded the Japanese administration an opening to censure or even remove personnel.

On one of the inspection tours after the system of daily food reports had been installed, I was startled by a *suijicho* with long service calling me aside to proudly point out how he had cached a half dozen or so of Supply Department issue, monster-sized loaf cans of processed meat, to be available for his *dantai*'s food should an emergency arise. He had been a cook since the early period of the camp, when the food distributions by the Supply Department were irregular due to insufficient warehoused foodstuffs and undependable shipping schedules, and had developed the practice of setting aside a small store of canned food as insurance against interruptions in supply. At once I recognized that the practice held the potential for fundamentally subverting the whole recently installed food-reporting system. But I also appreciated the depth of personal commitment to the welfare of the *dantai*'s people that the chief cook was displaying and was in no position to assure him that the conditions of the war had changed and that need for hoarding food no longer existed. I temporized, complimenting him on his foresight, but counseled against increasing the size of the cache, now that food supplies appeared to arrive regularly on the island.

The trade store for the Japanese area and several of the private entrepreneurs licensed to engage in business were sources of foods that provided a little variety by way of supplement to the daily issue in camp. To the end of providing

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an incentive to work, improving camp morale, and not so incidentally preventing the accumulation of excess money in camp, a candy shop and a bakery also had been licensed and periodically made wholesale purchases from the Supply Department. The internees could buy from the trade store basic seasonings such as salt and pepper and such luxuries as jams, peanut butter, tea, and coffee. When they could get the necessary raw materials, the bakery sold bread and the candy shop *manju* (Japanese-style cookies of flour dough filled with sweetened beans). Even though the internees were rationed in their purchases, the goods available frequently ran out, and lots were drawn to determine who could buy those remaining. All pricing was regulated by the military government to be appropriate to a laborer's pay scale but also to permit a small profit. I like *manju*, but after sampling it and approving its quality I felt uncomfortable in purchasing more and deliberately refrained. I was enjoying ample food at the mess, and I knew that there never was going to be enough *manju* to meet the demand in camp. Each piece I ate would deprive some civilian of the opportunity to enjoy the variation from *suijiba* fare that it symbolized. Probably needless to add, the Supply Department included foodstuffs sold to internees as part of the allotted totals of all foods going into camp when computing the caloric content of the food issued to the civilians.

After the war was declared over, and computing the "points" necessary to return to the United States and be demobilized monopolized the attention of almost all in the armed forces on Saipan, Mayor Shoji approached me with a novel suggestion. Now that the war was behind us, and the Americans were getting ready to go home, would it not be a nice gesture if the Japanese cooks in Area 3 prepared a Japanese-style meal for the officers of the military government before they left Saipan? After all, some of the best chefs on Saipan were interned in camp, and they could cook a variety of delicacies certain to please the American palate. When I carried the proposal to the officers' mess, some

responded initially with a degree of suspicion and a few expressed abhorrence of Japanese food. This negativism was overcome by the pragmatic realization of others that it was fairly late in the game for the Japanese internees to be plotting to poison the military government team. To remove all objections, the mess would prepare an alternative lunch for those disliking “gook” food. I brought an affirmative answer back to the *yakuba*, together with an agreed-upon date; all that remained was to make the necessary plans and assemble the required utensils.

The *yakuba* sent the designated chief cook over to the kitchen of the officers' mess with a list of the raw foods that would have to be requisitioned and made ready. Very early in the morning of the appointed day, a cooking crew appeared at the kitchen to prepare the meal and worked steadily until noontime. The officers entered the mess hall, some a little apprehensively, but soon were enjoying a sumptuous feast of vegetable *tempura* (raw vegetables dipped in egg batter and cooked in hot oil), a tasty *sukiyaki* (meat and vegetable stew), and *cha wan mushi* (a type of custard). Many seemed a little squeamish about dipping their slices of *maguro sashimi* (raw tuna fish) into soy or mustard and eating it raw, and did not appear to take kindly to the taste of the *miso* soup or the *suimono* (salt-cured pickled vegetables). The cooks had laboriously chopped carrots, bamboo shoots, and lotus root into minute pieces the size of rice grains, and mixed them with the cooked rice, so that the officers were offered a unique starch substitute for plain boiled white rice. I considered it a deliciously successful meal, and so did those of my colleagues who were at all familiar with Japanese cuisine. All that was lacking was warmed Japanese *sake*, but any that may once have been on the island had long since been consumed.

On the conclusion of the meal I went back to the kitchen to thank the cooks and praise them for their efforts. I found them neatly cleaning up after their morning's work and preparing to move the leftover cooked food back to camp.

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And what a surplus: dishpans full of the rice combined with diced vegetables, mountains of *tempura*, containers full of cooked *sukiyaki*, slabs of raw *maguro* thinly sliced into rectangular, bite-sized pieces, in all enough food to have served a military government team many, many times larger than our allotted size. Not only did the officers of the naval military government mess eat well on that memorable day, but so did a greater number of Japanese civilians, probably for the first time since they had been interned in Camp Susupe.

Fish

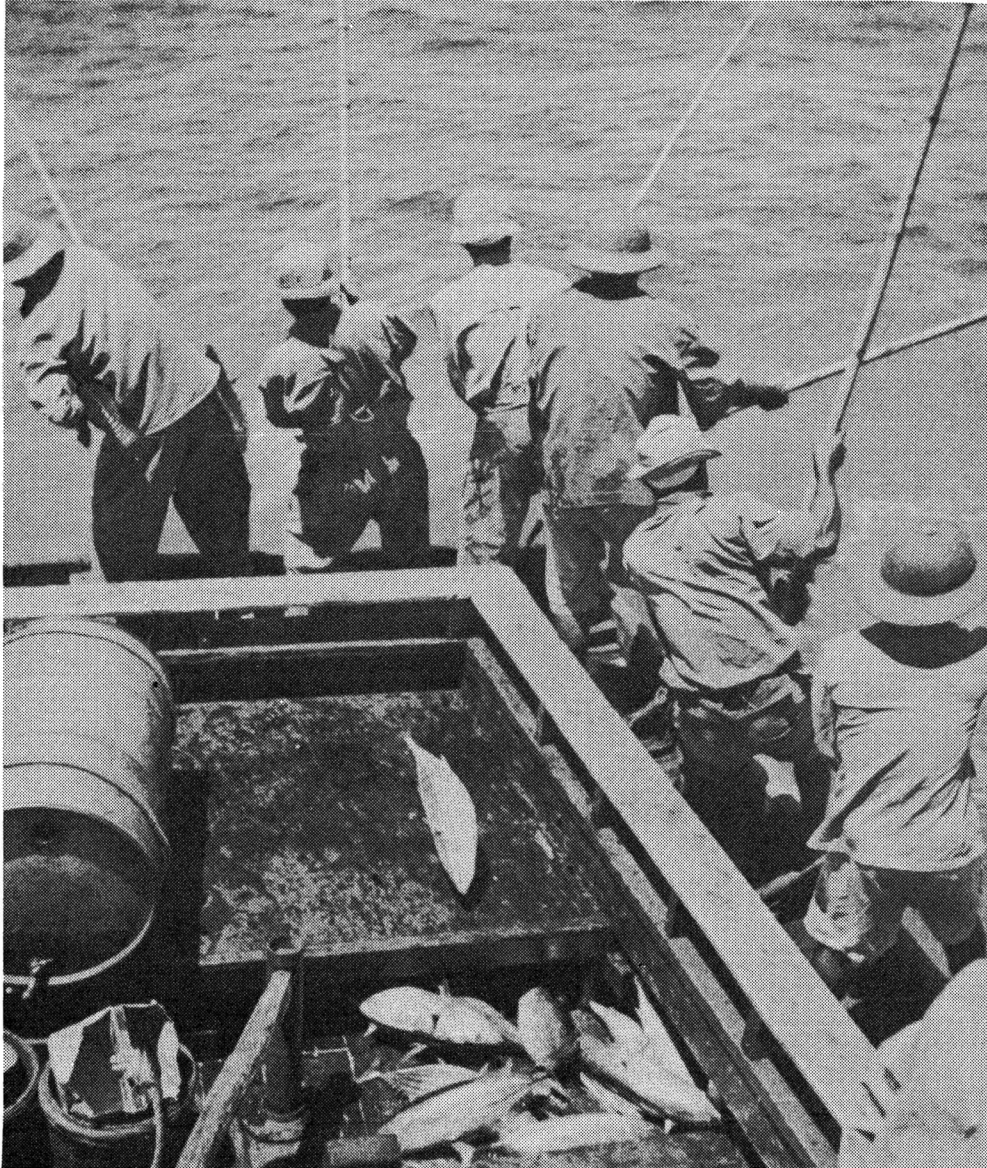
Vast schools of pelagic fish migrate through the waters of the western Pacific, and Saipan's prewar catch of some fifty thousand pounds daily during the height of the fishing season had provided an important source of food for the *naichijin* (people of Japan). In particular they were supplied with *katsubushi*, a unique essential of their diet. After being boiled, *katsu* (bonito) fillets are slowly smoked over low fires until they resemble chunks of dried wood, and become so hard that like it they can be whittled with a knife. Shavings of *katsubushi* are added as flavoring to the traditional Japanese daily dish of *miso shiyo* (a soup made from a fermented rice base). Scrounged Japanese military stores of *katsubushi* held in the warehouses of the naval military government's Supply Department had long since been depleted by the time I arrived on Saipan. However, shortly after D day it was not a replacement supply, but the catching and distribution of fresh fish that began commanding the near full-time attention of the fisheries officer and his staff attached to the naval military government. The preparation of *katsubushi* was not renewed on Saipan until near the end of the war, when it would have a negligible impact on civilian food consumption in Camp Susupe. But it was a different story with the fresh fish caught under the auspices of the military government. By June 1945 the daily catch would be more than sufficient to supply the civilian population on the island, with the surplus distributed to the military. In the following month as much as five thousand pounds of dressed fish were being distributed daily to the American armed forces.

When "softening up" the Japanese defenses on Saipan, part of the military objective was to destroy any Japanese craft that might threaten the landings or

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interfere with the supplying of American forces ashore. Simultaneously, the Japanese were scuttling their craft so that none could fall into American hands. As a consequence, every one of the sampans in Saipanese waters that had been used to catch fish, whether moored close to land or standing offshore, was sunk. Coincidentally, at the same time the *campo* (bombardment) also destroyed all of the land installations used to handle fish and service the fishing fleet. If fish were to be caught again and provide a meaningful supplement to the supplies being transported to Saipan, the military government fisheries officer would somehow have to rebuild the former fishing industry out of the devastation war had brought. While the navy military government sections of the chief of Naval Operations in Washington and the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Operations Area at Pearl Harbor debated the possibility of initiating large-scale fishing projects in the Pacific, the fisheries officer on Saipan, mostly by begging and borrowing, patched together a jerry-built operation that succeeded in once again landing a significant amount of fresh fish.

My initial reaction when talking with the fisheries officer was to discount the difficulties he was encountering. There were United States naval vessels of every size and description in the waters all around Saipan, so why not borrow some small boats and drop a few lines overboard to catch fish? The response revealed both the general unwillingness of the navy to make anything that floated available for Japanese civilian use, and the necessity of having specially designed craft and employing appropriate fishing techniques if fish were to be caught in numbers sufficient to make the effort worthwhile. Bonito were plentiful in Saipanese waters, the prewar Japanese fishing methods had been effective, if crude, and in camp there were skilled bonito fishers who could be put to work if only they had the necessary equipment. The first priority was to locate the sunken sampans and determine which were salvageable. Once raised, they could be repaired and refurbished; needed parts could be cannibalized from those not worth salvaging. Some



Japanese internees at work in the revived the fishing industry. (*US Navy*)

of this work could be accomplished by trained civilians from camp, but essential was the assistance of military personnel from other units, and the use of their equipment—which was almost always arranged on a personal basis completely outside the formal chain of command. The island was combed for unused military

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materials that could be diverted to the project or nominally borrowed if their outright transfer as declared surplus could not be cajoled.

After long hours of diving, eight Japanese sampans were raised, only to find that the engines of those with sound hulls defied repair. Eventually six were fitted with American engines and made ready. Several small boats for catching bait were also restored. During this period the military government's boat repair yard in the Saipan harbor had to be repeatedly moved, as the area occupied continued to be reassigned for other military uses. Five months after D day, the first Japanese sampan was believed in condition to begin fishing, but then establishing seaworthiness took an agonizingly long time. Ignobly, craft would have to be towed back to the military government's fishing docks for further work. During this period of frustrating delays, only the devoted commitment of the fisheries officer and his staff prevented abandonment of the entire project.

While the materiel problems were being confronted, and one by one resolved, personnel matters also had to be faced. The employment experience shown on the personal records of civilians in Area 3 was searched to identify internees with diving, mechanical, shipwright, and welding skills. Sometimes obtaining their release from the units in which they were already working and their reassignment to the fishing project necessitated considerable perseverance in securing the cooperation of the military government personnel concerned. Crews of fishermen had to be assembled, but despite the seeming simplicity of the task, unexpected complications developed. Some of the men shown on the camp records as civilian fishermen proved to be Japanese military who had successfully entered the camp under the false claim of being fishermen caught up in the invasion while temporarily in Saipanese waters. Normally, Japanese military seeking to live in Susupe and avoid the prisoner-of-war camp could be identified and separated out because they were not known to the civilian scrutinizers as island residents. But for those claiming to be fishermen, this test was turned

against itself, for such transients would necessarily be unknown by the civilians on Saipan. Only through testing the skills of the putative fishermen was it possible to catch the impostors, remove them from camp, and ultimately select trained crews from those remaining. That they had indeed been fishermen before the war was reinforced by an incident shortly after the project had succeeded in landing fish. To a man, they objected about the manner in which they were being paid, protesting that it violated the traditional way fishermen the world round were remunerated by each receiving a share in the value of a vessel's catch.

An entirely different range of problems confronted the fisheries officer after he had surmounted his materiel and personnel difficulties. One of them was securing bait. Customarily bonito are caught on dry, unbarbed hooks, the fishermen holding poles and casting their lines into schools of fish biting in a frenzy at what they perceive to be small fish attempting to escape them. The whole process depends on having the necessary bait to release on one side of the sampan, with the part fleeing consumption by the bonito then being scooped up on the other side to be reused, and water sprays continuing the illusion of their presence. Saipan does not enjoy large stocks of small fish suitable as bait, so the small boats would have to spend considerable time searching inshore waters. Once netted, the bait fish would be transferred to the sampans' bait wells before the sampans could put out to sea and start to fish. As something of an ironic note, the bays and waters that yielded the most bait fish were those where the navy anchored its vessels or secured them to docks. The debris the vessels dropped into the water served as food for the bait fish and attracted them in ever larger numbers. But the navy authorities refused to allow small boats crewed by Japanese civilians to be anywhere near an American ship, let alone come close enough to net the school of little fish sheltering in its shadow. They raised as objections the potential breach of security, the affording to enemy civilians of an opportunity to engage in sabotage, and the sheer duplicity of the Japanese, which made them

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inherently untrustworthy. The same reasons were advanced when, loaded with bait fish, the sampans sought permission to put out to sea. But then the additional obstacle was raised that the Japanese civilians might use the sampans to escape from Saipan.

Satisfying responses had to be fashioned for each of the objections raised. A navy craft could accompany the "fishing fleet" and armed naval personnel could be placed on the sampans before they left shore. On the charts of the ocean surrounding Saipan, areas would be delineated where the sampans might sail; all other waters would be off bounds. Also, security limits were to be set around each naval vessel, with the civilians on a vessel of the military government punishable for violating them. Gradually, navy opposition was overcome, and the fisheries project came ever closer to the day when it could be put to the test. Once the sampans were operational, some doubters even began to concede it was not impossible that fish might be caught, but would the volume be sufficient to make the whole effort worthwhile?

Work in camp kept me so busy as to lose track of the day-to-day developments in the fisheries project. I was vaguely aware that the effort was continuing, for the fisheries truck with its load of men would take off from camp each morning and come back late in the afternoon. One day after the rest of the camp's labor crews had long finished and returned, the fisheries truck drove jubilantly into Area 3, piled with open boxes holding a catch of bonito. It had just delivered fish to both Charan Kanoa and the Korean area, and now proceeded through the Japanese area, dropping off fish at each of the *suijiba*. Food for the second meal of the day had already been cooked, and here were piles of fish being delivered at the *suijiba* doorsteps, with no way of holding raw fish until the following day. Camp Susupe did not have a single refrigerator in which the fish might be kept, nor did the military government's Supply Department. That is why, when a farm animal was to be slaughtered, all of the *suijiba* scheduled to receive meat from

Fish

the carcass were notified in advance and the distribution of the meat so timed that it could be cooked on the same day. There was no alternative but for the *suijicho* in each *dantai* to recall his workers. While some cleaned the fish, others rekindled fires under the giant caldrons and filled them with water. Once cooked, the fish could be kept without refrigeration for the following day's meal.

Once the technical success of catching fish had been demonstrated, rather than signaling the opening of a bright new future for the camp, the operation only compounded problems both inside and outside camp. The amount of fish landed, not just whether any would be caught, remained uncertain. Sometimes sufficient bait could not be netted; other times, when the sampans were loaded with bait and ready to leave, no naval escort was available to accompany them. Once out at sea, if lucky they might catch sight of a flock of screaming birds hovering over and diving into the ocean, marking the presence of small fish evading a school of larger fish feeding on them by attempting to escape to the surface where they fell prey to the birds. But before the sampans could approach close enough to release their bait and begin fishing, the school of bonito might move on to another part of the ocean off bounds to the sampans. And of course, the weather was not always cooperative, so the prospect of a large, steady supply of fish to feed the civilians in camp faded. Without refrigerators, chilled fish could not be held for later distribution. How could the Supply Department of the military government be sure of furnishing a daily ration containing the requisite calories without foreknowledge of the volume of fish that would be available? My hunch is that the Supply Department pretty much continued to follow its regular routine, and looked the other way so long as relatively few fish were entering camp.

The handling of fresh fish by the cooks could in no way be regarded as a task equivalent to the preparation of truck crops harvested from the cooperative farms. About the only comparability was that the kitchen staff made *suimono* (Japanese pickles) out of some of the excess greens brought into camp; similarly,

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when cleaning fish, they might save the fish guts to be salted and stored away in bamboo casks as *shiogara* (salted fish entrails). Once sufficiently fermented, the *shiogara* could be used as a seasoning when cooking food. Beyond this, the parallel failed, for the fish-handling chore was a far smellier task and required considerable attention to sanitation requirements. Until the garbage truck made its rounds, the fish detritus consigned to the converted steel oil drums serving as garbage cans emanated strong odors. From the viewpoint of the people in camp, the success of the fish-catching project, while welcome, had some negative aspects.

Bonito is an oilier fish than albacore, skipjack, or its other relatives with which Americans are familiar as "tuna," and it also has a greater content of dark, stronger-tasting meat. Because of this, or the uncertainty of the supply, the messes of the military units on the island did not initially embrace enthusiastically the inclusion of fresh fish as part of their meals. The smaller *muro* (baby mackerel) taken by seine net and the turtles occasionally caught were all welcomed for camp consumption.

Eventually a surplus reefer, sufficiently large to store several days' anticipated catch, was located on Guam. After the normal delay in completing the necessary paperwork, it was brought to Saipan and installed on the military government's fishing dock. No longer was there any compelling urgency each day to quickly transport all landed fish from sampan to ultimate destination or risk having the catch spoil. Further reducing the pressure that had characterized the initial stages of the project was a new development promising to handle all of the surplus fish that might not otherwise be consumed.

The economics officer of the naval military government saw in the catching of bonito an opportunity to resurrect Saipan's *katsubushi* industry, devastated by the war. The services of a number of civilians experienced in filleting and cooking the fish were engaged, and production gradually started in a small shed erected at

the edge of camp. Day after day the *katsubushi* crew sweated over the banked fires, tending to the boiled fish drying out over the coals. However, rather than regularly delivering the finished product to the camp for preparation of meals, they stored it away in barrels and soon filled a small warehouse built on the side of the shed. I never knew exactly what the economics officer intended to do with the new product, but suspect that in line with the military government's objective of rehabilitating the island economy, he was anticipating recreating an industry that would sell its products outside Saipan once the war was over and a degree of normalcy had returned to the world.

I retain three vivid sensory memories of Camp Susupe, one of sight, another of smell, and the third of sound. The first is the look of utter incredulity and consternation that spread across the face of the economics officer when one day, on inspecting the stored *katsubushi*, he found it riddled with holes as though unknown worms had chomped their way through each piece. The memory of smell involves the stench of rotting fish parts pervading the camp whenever there was an unexpected delay in emptying the garbage cans adjacent to the *suijiba* after fish had been delivered. And the third memory is of not hearing Kimichan sing again. This last requires explanation.

The naval military government's records for the internees in Camp Susupe were kept in an office that opened onto mine, and were maintained by a half dozen civilians under the direction of a navy chief yeoman. Kimichan was the youngest member of the group, a diminutive roly-poly of a woman around twenty years of age. When working she would sometimes spontaneously break out in muted song, which I enjoyed as a welcome diversion from the monotony of camp routine. One morning when I arrived at my office, I found Kimichan quietly crying and somber faces on the rest of the staff. On inquiry, the navy chief told me Kimichan's father had been sentenced to jail. He was a *suijicho*, and a few afternoons before, after the last meal had been cooked, several fish were

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Kimichan. (Norman Meller)

delivered to his *dantai*. Instead of having them boiled for use the following day, he decided to reward his kitchen crew, and directed that the fish be filleted and cut into small pieces suitable to be eaten as *sashimi*. He and some fifteen others then enjoyed the luxury of a snack of raw fish dipped in soy sauce. This diversion was soon reported to the camp police, who investigated, and Kimichan's father and the rest of the kitchen crew were ordered to appear in provost court. Not only did the judge "throw the book" at them by sentencing all to terms in jail, but he subjected Kimichan's father to a severe tongue lashing. For the sake of a few fish he had violated his trust as *suijicho*. Her father publicly disgraced, Kimichan could no longer hold her head high. Although she continued at her job in the records office, never again did I hear Kimichan singing as she worked.

Charlie Chaplin and Toscanini

The first time I entered the Japanese area of Camp Susupe at night was shortly after I had arrived on Saipan, and I admit to having been apprehensive. After all, I was venturing alone into the midst of 13,500 enemy aliens. Once beyond the camp gate, and its single electric light bulb casting a halo over the Chamorro sentry on duty, I was engulfed in a darkness that cloaked with anonymity anyone I might encounter. Except for the *yakuba*, there was no electricity inside camp. No light from moon or stars illuminated the camp buildings or shone on the faces of the civilians. Over my left arm I had draped a folded poncho, concealing that my hand was holding a holster encasing a navy-issue, .45-caliber revolver. So provided with a sense of false courage, I walked through Area 3, as human figures quietly loomed up before me out of the darkness, only to quickly pass by and disappear. Parenthetically, I might add, never again did I enter the camp armed.

Gradually, as my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I was able to discern the outlines of the *shik'sha* I was passing. Occasionally, shining through a door frame or open shutter, I could see the flame of a candle burning, casting little light on the building's interior. Here and there on the ground, the flare of a very small fire outside a *shik'sha* marked where some occupant was brewing tea. Camp rules that I had just recently perused prohibited lights or fires between sunset and sunrise unless authorized, and I concluded that either permission had been granted for these tiny flames, or, more likely, the prohibition was no longer being enforced.

As I approached one of the few Japanese police outposts in the camp, and

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passed into and out of the faint light of the gasoline lantern hung over it, the nodding policeman would start on seeing me and awkwardly salute. Most of the time the camp was silent, with the quiet occasionally broken by a child crying. Apparently most of the civilians were already asleep inside their quarters, and those awake were communicating only through whispers. What else was there to do, as the camp rules—again unless countermanded—prohibited singing, playing of instruments, or making any disturbing noise after 20:00 hours. After all, the work crews, who got up early each morning, had to have their sleep. I came away from that initial visit with an impression of the camp, once the short twilight of the tropics had completely faded, being smothered under a stifling black cover, with little its occupants could legally do to break the monotony of their life at night.

The one exception to this nightly blackout routinely occurred semi-monthly, when the Labor Section scheduled its payday. At a large open space central to Area 3, for a period of up to three hours, night became almost day as large lights powered by a temporary generator shone on the Labor Section's portable pay booth and lit up the surrounding area. Waiting workers lined up in long rows, snaking out from the booth, and gradually inched closer as those in line before them were paid. Once at the booth, and after having their names and identifying labor tags checked by the payroll personnel, they received envelopes containing in American money the amounts shown on the payroll as due them for work performed since the last payday. Receipt was acknowledged by placing a thumbprint on the payroll record, guarding against an impostor receiving the wages of another civilian.

Initially, I was told, there was only one pay line, and because of name confusion and disagreements over time credited, "payday" took an interminably long period to complete, stretching out close to midnight. By the time I arrived on Saipan, the whole process had been systematized, with separate treatment for

nonroutine matters speeding the flow. This, along with the tripling of the pay lines, had materially compressed the time necessary for completing the operation. However, it was not regarded by the internees as an unmixed blessing, for the pay period afforded an opportunity to socialize in the cool of the evening, to meet with friends, and attend to matters for which there was inadequate opportunity during the workday. The bright lights also attracted groups of children from all over camp, who played with each other at the fringes of the crowd. So twice a month, in the nightly gloom and silence of Area 3, a little island of brightness and noisy gaiety mushroomed for a few hours, only to disappear once the generators were stopped, to again reappear the next payday some two weeks later.

In contrast to the civilian camp on Tinian, within Area 3 of Camp Susupe I remember very little being organized to provide for the entertainment or recreation of civilians. On Tinian a troop of *kabuki* players periodically provided the civilian Japanese with performances of both traditional and modern plays. Occasionally in Susupe there would be field days for both children and adults that included mass activities such as group calisthenics and athletic dancing. Relay races were favorites of the Japanese, as they maximized both involvement and team play. The opening of a recreation center in the camp provided the occasion for a series of *sumo* matches. An area adjoining the naval military government quarters on the shore had been set aside as a Japanese civilian swimming beach. At least once a week all children of school age were marched there from Area 3 under the watchful protection of their teachers. At prescribed times, adults, as well, had access to the beach for recreation, but only under limitations that assured continuance of their internment. A small temple located in the middle of the Japanese cemetery, with fittings donated by the Hongwanji Buddhist Society of Honolulu, served the spiritual needs of the Buddhists in camp. Under the guidance of a Buddhist priest, appropriate ceremonies for births, marriages, and deaths were observed, and important religious holidays celebrated.

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Although there was a small library in Susupe whose collection included some books printed in either Japanese or English and a few American magazines, it was obviously inadequate. The Office of War Information supplied the camp with copies of its *Photo Review*, printed in Japanese, but the internees treated it as wartime propaganda, which it clearly was. The Office of War Information occasionally also brought to camp copies of the *Hawaii Times*, a newspaper published in Hawai'i that covered world events, including news originating in Japan. The *Mariana Hiho*, produced by the Office of War Information, which carried Camp Susupe news as well as limited current events, was regularly distributed in camp. Since one of its functions was reputed to be serving as a propaganda leaflet to be dropped on Japanese-occupied areas to establish that Japanese civilians were being well taken care of on Saipan, this explains why the *Hiho* did not have an avid camp readership. Beyond these snippets, my memory of the recreational aspect of camp life remains a blank, probably stemming from the bureaucratic organization of the military government and its congruent categorization of duties, so that concern for this aspect did not fall within my regular sphere. In the absence of the *yakuba* taking the initiative to launch an effort to improve civilian morale in camp, and seeking to gain through me the military government commander's approval for such proposed action, I had enough to do without taking on this additional function. However, there was one exception, when by sponsoring camp movies, I did attempt to break the dreariness of camp life.

It all started with the Office of War Information and was surprisingly linked to Charlie Chaplin, not that the Office, in seeking to help win the war through influencing public opinion, would have been inherently adverse to using humor to that end. However, I am confident that it had no plans to bring a Charlie Chaplin film to display that night—or any night—to the internees of Camp Susupe. But unbeknownst to the Office of War Information, that is just what it did.

One evening sometime in the late spring, a crew from the Office of War Information rigged up a temporary screen in the Japanese area and after dark projected several short films concerned with American life. As I recall, the first of them had either a Japanese-language sound track or Japanese-language captions, but the others had neither, and relied entirely on English. The subject of the last film was an American symphony orchestra, shown playing before a large audience in the United States under the direction of the renowned conductor, Arturo Toscanini. Almost none of the internees who had gathered to view the films could read the English captions, and probably even fewer were familiar with classical western music or had witnessed it played by a full symphony orchestra.

After the initial rustle of bewilderment among the internees as the first few scenes showed Toscanini raising his baton and directing the formally garbed orchestra members to begin, a surprised murmur of recognition swept through the crowd: "Charlie Chaplin!" The very appearance of Toscanini with his long white hair, the abrupt movements of his head accompanying the emotional empathy with the themes of the music so vividly displayed on his face, the exaggerated sweep of his arms as he cued the various members of the orchestra on when to play, only confirmed it. The nature of the music was entirely lost on the entranced onlookers. If the camera focused on cymbals being struck or a horn sounded in response to Toscanini's signal, it only served to reinforce the erroneous conclusion that a comedy was being performed, and sent the internees off into renewed gales of laughter. They were mesmerized by what they took to be the antics of a world-famous comedian. Once the film ended, tremendous applause erupted. Not even the turning off of the temporary lights erected by the Office of War Information stilled the civilians' enthusiastic chatter as they made their way back to their *shik'sha*.

The following morning, as I walked through camp to my office from my quarters on the beach, I was repeatedly stopped by internees inquiring whether it

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would be possible to show another movie, frequently with the addition of reference to "Charlie Chaplin." I knew it would have been pointless to attempt to dissuade them from the mistaken identity, so while agreeing with them that "yes, indeed" the leader of the orchestra in the film was *eimei* (famous), I remained silent over the fact that it was because he was Toscanini the conductor and not Chaplin the comedian. Incidentally, I do not remember anyone inquiring about bringing another program of classical western music into camp. I could promise no further showing of Charlie Chaplin, but given the very positive boost demonstrated to camp morale, I resolved that somehow I would have more movies shown at night in Camp Susupe, even though it was not part of my directed duties. It proved easier said than done.

Bringing films into camp was a haphazard undertaking by the Office of War Information and not one of its routine activities. Nor was the occasional borrowing by the naval military government of films happening to be on the island, which were then projected at the enlisted men's mess hall, but it did suggest an avenue by which films might be shown to the civilians in camp. The temporary use of a portable generator could be arranged, as could be access to a 16-mm film projector, if the requests were made sufficiently in advance to obtain the necessary approval. The erection of a makeshift screen presented no insurmountable difficulty, just so long as it was removed reasonably soon after the showing. To do otherwise would have presented too great a temptation for some youngster in camp desiring to demonstrate his skill by throwing rocks at the unsullied target. The real difficulty lay in securing information on the availability of films, and this sufficiently in advance to allow all of the preliminary arrangements to be made.

As I recall, the showing of a western provided the first test, and it was an overwhelming success. Even though the civilians in Area 3 could not understand the English dialogue, the action in the film, with its exaggerated portrayal of

good and evil, pretty well spoke for itself. It is not improbable that in prewar days the internees had already been introduced to this Hollywood genre, although undoubtedly embellished with suitable Japanese subtitles. Drawing large attendance, other films followed, mostly at irregular intervals, despite my goal of one showing a week.

Sometimes the projection of a film had to be delayed until long after dark because the one being borrowed was first shown at some military installation on the island and then rushed to camp. Meanwhile an expectant crowd would gather and wait, more tolerant of the delay than an American audience would be. Possibly through the *dantaicho*, the *yakuba* had explained how the nature of the jerry-built system for obtaining the films caused the delays. The apogee was reached one evening when the enlisted man of the naval military government responsible for bringing the film to camp arrived late in a flurried state. He had waited to receive the arranged-for film, only to be told it could not be borrowed. Desperate, he had obtained another film. All that he knew about the substitute was that it was an unrestricted army training film. The hour was late, the assembled crowd beginning to grow restless, so without any knowledge of its contents, the projectionist inserted the first reel in the projector.

For what to me seemed an interminable period, the gathered civilians of Area 3 were then introduced to the intricacies of how to operate an army road grader and with it prepare a roadbed for paving. Some of the film had been taken from the perspective of the driver, other parts from that of a viewer standing ahead or on the side of the road. Yard after yard and then foot after foot of the whole surface was scraped and piled into long neat rows of dirt parallel to the roadway, only for the whole to be redistributed over the surface, and the same process repeated over and over again.

As soon as I became aware of the absurdity of showing the film in camp and was about to order that the projector be stopped, I noticed that the assembled

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crowd was patiently watching the whole boring thing as though some mystery were to be revealed once that torn-up road was ultimately smoothed out and the last bit of soil redistributed. So I, too, waited until the end of the first reel, when the surface of the road was finally in place, and ended the show. I never did find out what the Japanese civilians in camp thought the film was all about.

Sensei, Is There a Special Medicine?

By early 1945, Camp Susupe's medical and public health problems were well under control. From what I was told by some of the military government old-timers, and confirmed subsequently through reading official naval reports, this was a far cry from the situation immediately after the air and sea bombardment softened up the island for the American invasion. From D day, combat medical personnel tried to tend civilians along with the military casualties. Not until four days later did the first doctor attached to the naval military government, accompanied by two corpsmen, get ashore, and in less than an hour they had used up their supplies. The combat medical personnel during those early days of the fighting also ran out of the medical supplies they had brought, and only through locating Japanese medical stocks and using them for both troops and civilians were they able to avert catastrophe. Crucial supplies such as sulpha powder for wounds, tetanus antitoxins, medicine for dysentery, plaster of paris, and even soap for a while remained in short supply.

On 26 June, just eleven days after D day, a unit of the Army 31st Field Hospital set up a 150-bed, tent-type civilian hospital adjoining Camp Susupe to tend the 1,200 civilians needing hospitalization. To supplement the combat medical personnel, trained civilians were put to work as doctors, nurses, nurse's aides, and midwives, a practice continued by the naval military government as its medical complement assumed care of the civilians in camp. With the camp taking shape, the naval military government erected dispensaries in each of the three areas, and to the Japanese dispensaries assigned both American naval and Japanese civilian doctors, plus a large complement of civilian nurse's aides. A month

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after D day, an average of 1,100 people were reporting daily to the dispensaries for treatment.

The civilian mortality rate was gruesome, with some two thousand known deaths tallied in the first three months after D day, almost nineteen hundred of them Japanese. Diarrhea, dysentery, and malnutrition are listed as the principal causes of death, but wounds and their attendant infections must also have been major contributors. For October, the fourth month, infants and children accounted for over half of the total deaths reported. From then on, the civilian mortality rate dropped and continued to fall materially.

Once the 369th Station Hospital was erected elsewhere on the island, civilian patients were transferred to it from the army field hospital. Later they were moved into a civilian annex of the Station Hospital overlooking Magicienne Bay, miles away from Camp Susupe. (The distance was to assume a new significance months later, when I rode out of camp at the head of a truck caravan of civilians bent on wrecking the buildings and salvaging their lumber—but this is getting ahead of my story.) When a spanking new, five-hundred-bed Quonset naval hospital opened at the edge of Camp Susupe around the time I arrived on Saipan, once again all civilians were hospitalized adjoining the camp. The hospital staff of 14 officers and 186 enlisted men materially expanded the size of the naval military government unit. By the end of the war, the hospital was providing most of the medical care required by civilians in camp, with the remaining two dispensaries attending to only minor matters.

The civilian attitude toward medical personnel in the naval military government was generally favorable because of their contribution to the dramatic change in camp following the trauma of the bombardment and their sympathetic treatment of the internees. The ambivalence they occasionally encountered could be attributed to other factors. Civilian women were reluctant to be physically examined by navy corpsmen and adamantly opposed to their presence during

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childbirth. I was told that because of this navy nurses were added to the hospital staff. Another source of negativism in doctor-patient relationships arose from the civilians' need to obtain a doctor's medical excuse in order to absent themselves from work.

Daunting as was the medical situation initially confronting the naval military government, the magnitude of the public health problem was at least as challenging. The medical officer in charge was responsible for burial of the dead, maintenance of camp sanitation, garbage and waste disposal, and ridding the internees and living quarters of body lice. Despite spraying from airplanes and by joint crews of enlisted men and internees, swarms of flies and mosquitoes persisted. Continued vigilance was necessary to maintain the cleanliness of the *suijiba* and assure their staff's observance of the practices designed to prevent food poisoning. To discourage the breeding of mosquitoes, internees were required to keep the lids tightly secured on top of the barrels in which they caught rainwater from the roofs of their dwellings. *Dantaicho* (heads of sections) had to be reminded of their responsibility for keeping their *dantai* free of litter and reprimanded when they failed to do so. By early 1945, a complex, many-faceted system of public health and sanitation had evolved and was being methodically followed, best evidenced by the common sight of crews of a corpsman and his civilian assistants on their daily rounds as "fly details."

Sited on what was once agricultural land, Camp Susupe was soon overrun by field mice. (I had reason to learn that the mouse population was excessive after my very first night on Saipan: the following morning while dressing in my tent I found that a litter of tiny blind mice had been born in one of the shoes I had left under my cot while I slept.) Reducing the mice population was a persistent problem. Given the cramped quarters of the internees and the omnipresence of little children, widespread distribution of poisoned bait was too dangerous an option. Skeptics in the naval military government questioned the internees' complaints of

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food inadequacy. To them, the continuing mice problem only demonstrated that surplus food was entering camp, that the internees were wasting it, and so the mice fed on it and multiplied.

Someone in the internal Japanese administration proposed an innovative way to gain control over the mice population. The trade store had acquired a supply of tropical chocolate candy after it had become discolored in storage and, as well, insects had begun boring into some of the pieces. Rejected by the GIs, the candy had been declared military surplus. Why not reward the children in camp with a piece of this chocolate for each mouse caught and delivered to the *dantaicho*? For the children, probably encouraged by their families, the mice-catching scheme would offer a welcome opportunity to sweeten the camp diet at no expense.

Judged by the reports periodically issued of mouse carcasses turned in, the scheme appeared to be working exceedingly well. Although the children fashioned simple traps, so effective were they—or perhaps, so numerous was the rodent population—that soon the *yakuba* was being asked for what seemed excessive amounts of candy as rewards. As with most supply-and-demand relationships, the number of mice to be brought in for a candy reward was then doubled, and ultimately tripled. Then it was discovered that during the night, garbage cans holding discarded carcasses were being surreptitiously raided, and the following day the same mice were being submitted again. Clipping the ears when new carcasses were surrendered stopped the double counting. Ultimately, when it was no longer a game, the children lost interest in catching mice. As the number of mice in camp dwindled, what once was play became a chore. Moreover, the candy was neither particularly sweet nor palatable because it contained wax that prevented melting.

Shortly after I assumed my duties in camp, hundreds of children appeared with purple swatches scattered over their bodies. Scabies were running amok in camp, and seriatim, *dantai* by *dantai*, all children were examined by the medical

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personnel, and the colorful specific for this contagious disease—gentian violet—was liberally swabbed on all infected skin areas discovered. Children whose scabies were not cured by the initial attempt had to endure a follow-up examination and repeat treatment. Once the epidemic was under control, the sporadic appearance of the tell-tale color on the shaven head or limb of some hapless child showed that the disease had not been completely eradicated.

Intestinal parasites were another affliction endemic to the camp and suffered by almost all internees. Once the more pressing medical needs of individuals were attended to, and sanitation measures established so that maintenance of public health became a matter of routine observance, the medical personnel were able to turn their attention to preventive inoculations against infectious diseases and the eradication of body worms. To be effective, deworming required a major endeavor, far more than merely prescribing a dose of medicine. First, a public information program had to be mounted to acquaint the internees with the etiology of the disease and the necessity of defecating only in the camp's open-pit latrines. Ideally no one should walk barefoot, for wearing shoes or *zori* (thong sandals) would prevent contact with worm eggs on the ground. Because some in camp possessed neither, the areas around each *benjo* would have to be inspected frequently and kept sanitized. Finally, a complete regime of repeated ministrations of the deworming medicine must be observed to assure its efficacy, which necessitated lining up all of the internees and insisting that they each take the dosage prescribed over the allotted period. With much advance planning, and close cooperation between the camp administration, the internal Japanese police, and the naval government medical personnel, the eradication program was launched.

Given that the mass effort would ultimately affect thousands of people in the most intimate of ways, there had to be some rapid means for assuring that the medicine prescribed was at least generally effective in purging the interned

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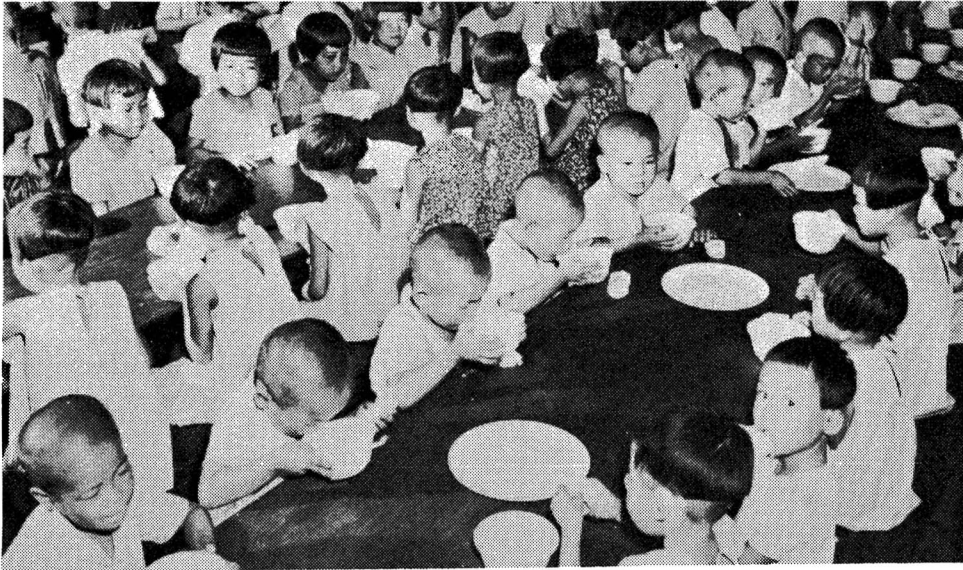


Children rescued by the US Marine Corps on Saipan. (*US Navy*)

civilians of their worms. To a hapless team of workers in the sanitation detail fell this noxious task. Once the deworming was under way, for the next few days they removed stool samples from the pit latrines and examined them for worms. In some cases this meant that the sanitation workers, after removing the latrine covers, would have to climb part way down into the pit, guarding themselves against falling into the smelly debris below. Inspection furnished ample proof that the project was proceeding satisfactorily.

Beside operating the civilian hospital and dispensaries in Camp Susupe, the medical personnel of the naval military government were responsible for two other distinctive institutions. One of these, the orphanage, was the apple of the chief medical officer's eye. Shortly after D day, the military government had found itself inundated with hundreds of orphan children, many infants, some as young as four months old. Given their many medical problems and emaciated physical condition, it was logical that oversight of orphans be assigned to the medical personnel. I was told that an emergency request for diapers, baby bottles,

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Children in the dining room of the Japanese orphanage on Saipan. (*US Navy*)

and nipples was the initial message the medical supply officer dispatched back to Honolulu. Women volunteers from camp were sought to care for the orphans. The naval military government hastily built a crude shelter to house them and equipped it with its own kitchen, the first structure to be erected. From these early beginnings emerged a model orphanage dedicated in the Japanese area during my tour on Saipan, four commodious Quonset huts radiating outward like spikes from a central building, the whole fenced off from the rest of the camp with its own play area for the children.

During the months since D day, it had been possible to place the Chamorro and Carolinian children with distant relatives, or to encourage their adoption into island families. The same was true for the Korean children in Area 2, so that only a residual group of eighty or so Japanese orphans remained. Meanwhile the civilian personnel of the orphanage were replaced, after it was learned that the Japanese women who had volunteered their services had been prostitutes on Saipan before the war. Despite their very dedicated performance in attending to

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the orphans, the military government accepted the suggestion from a civilian committee in camp that it would be best for the children if "better educated, more respectable ladies" cared for them. The high standards set for adoption of the Japanese children tended to discourage family placement, so that the orphanage gradually changed from a temporary shelter to an institution, with perpetuation becoming an end in itself. The Japanese in camp contributed to this process by dedicating funds for the orphans when raising money for the welfare needs of Susupe. Whenever I visited the orphanage, I would be immediately surrounded by a group of neatly dressed, healthy appearing, laughing children hanging onto me, visual evidence of what good medical treatment, a well-balanced diet, adequate living accommodations, and caring attention could achieve even under the adverse conditions of life in Camp Susupe.

The other separate institution within the responsibility of the military government medical unit was the leprosarium. It moved into new quarters while I was on Saipan, two small, neat buildings that I recall as being painted white, probably because of the sharp contrast of their appearance with the unpainted *shik'sha*, with their nondescript surfaces of scrounged materials. Physically apart from the hospital, the leprosarium was administered somewhat as a medical annex, with corpsmen daily bringing food, and doctors making periodic rounds. Ignoring the more humane policy then becoming accepted, of referring to this age-old scourge as Hansen's disease, the navy chose to continue to call those suffering from the disease lepers. The social ostracism that immediately engulfed anyone so labeled was of no concern to the navy. Ironically, the reference to the disease as leprosy had an unexpected positive aspect. A large, prominent sign reading "Leprosarium, Keep Out," erected at the gate leading into the grounds was a warning sufficient to frighten off even the most adventuresome GIs. It kept the area safe from their night-time forays, even though the leprosarium was outside the patrolled, barbed-wire limits of Camp Susupe.

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At this time, elsewhere in the world chaulmoogra oil was being used inconclusively against the microbe *Mycobacterium leprae*, responsible for causing the disease, and treatment with antibiotics was not yet well established. The medical personnel on Saipan believed that placing the patients in well-aired, separate facilities, providing them with nourishing food, and, to guard against secondary infection, treating any leprous lesion that might develop was the optimum care that could be provided. Such isolation also prevented the disease from spreading to others in camp through contact.

Several civilians had already been committed by the naval government doctors and were living in the leprosarium when I received a telephone call at my office. Two internees had just been diagnosed as having leprosy and the following morning were to be removed from the Japanese area to the leprosarium. There might be difficulties, and I was asked to be present to assist as interpreter, if necessary.

Early the next day I walked over to the Japanese dispensary inside Area 3 and found waiting the chief medical officer, the hospital ambulance with its driver, and two Japanese women. I judged one of the civilians to be about forty-five years old, the other half her age. The elder was small, dumpy, and undistinguished. The younger, while not a beauty, was taller, slimmer, and comely. Both had long hair tied in a bun at the back of the head, and wore the nondescript garb of the camp, an amalgam of altered clothing that owed its origins to Red Cross distribution and cloth purchased from the trade store. Each had at her feet a pitifully small bundle, tied with a *furoshiki* (square Japanese cloth used for wrapping bundles), that contained all of her worldly possessions. Neither had any visible skin eruptions or blemishes, nor did their faces display any hint of the leonine features associated with the later stages of leprosy. The doctors must have discovered areas of their bodies insensitive to pain on examination, as when being pricked by a pin, the sign of nerve impairment that first heralds the

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onslaught of more destructive body changes to follow.

On questioning by the chief medical officer, both women briefly responded that they had been told they had *raibyō* (leprosy). Yes, they understood that they would have to leave where they were living in camp and go to the leprosarium. They were ready and had brought their possessions with them. Neither showed any emotion or made any sign of resistance. They just waited to be told what to do next. The chief medical officer commented that we had better get going and suggested that as it was such a nice day, we all four walk over to the leprosarium. It would take less than half an hour and offer an opportunity for him to talk to me about a number of public health problems in camp requiring attention. The *furoshiki*-wrapped bundles could be loaded into the ambulance and taken over by the driver. And so our little group started off.

It was truly one of those rather rare days on Saipan when the weather was cool and crisp, the sun not yet so hot as to debilitate. It was pleasant walking over, and soon the doctor and I were engrossed in discussing the matters he was raising. Behind us silently trailed the two women, the younger in the rear. Occasionally as I walked I would glance back, and noticed that the distance between the two was gradually widening, with the younger falling farther back, while the elder trudged dutifully on. I could well imagine the thoughts tumbling through the younger woman's mind. With each step she was leaving the world she knew and coming closer to a horrible future. This was the last time she would be in camp, see children playing, be free to visit with her friends. Once she entered the gate to the leprosarium she would become part of the living dead. But still her face showed no emotion, nor did she utter any sound that might reveal her feelings. All that could be heard was the sound of the women's *zori* rhythmically slapping on the ground as they walked behind us.

Suddenly the pace of the footsteps quickened, and I immediately jumped to the conclusion that the women were running away. I was wrong. The younger

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woman was running toward us. As she came close, a beseeching half-smile on her face, she timidly pulled at my shirtsleeve and asked, “*Sensei* [honored person] is there a special medicine in America for me?” How I hated having to translate her question into English for the chief medical officer and in turn translate for her his anticipated negative reply.

Economics, and the Labor *Shibai*

As soon as it was possible to introduce a degree of organized routine into the initial chaos of camp life, practically all internees capable of doing anything useful were put to work. The dead had to be buried, the sick and wounded cared for, food gathered to supplement the minimal military supplies available, and temporary shelters erected. At first this meant that civilians were assigned to whatever undertakings had the highest priorities to relieve suffering in camp. All were treated as ungraded laborers, regardless of their education and individual skills. By the end of the first month, with screening identifying the capabilities of adult internees, they could be reassigned to more permanent labor details appropriate to their individual capacities. However, the bulk of the civilians remained in Susupe's unskilled labor pool, allocated, regardless of classification, to work both inside and outside the camp. Once Saipan was declared secure, the naval military government found itself hard put to simultaneously meet the near insatiable demands from the military units on the island for civilian labor and to provide the internal services necessary to keep Camp Susupe functioning. There was always need for stevedores, ditch diggers, cleaners, laundresses, seamstresses, nurse's aides, and carpenters, to name a few of the categories established by the Labor Office.

To the naval military government, putting civilians to work had a far more important purpose than merely providing cheap labor to help accomplish short-term military objectives. It was considered fundamental that internees be kept busy, to the end of building morale and encouraging their rehabilitation. Lest this be dismissed offhand as a transparent rationalization, even more significantly the

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military government regarded such work as essential to building a self-sufficient island economy to replace what had been totally destroyed by the war. While there was no plan to raise the standard of living above the prewar level, ultimately the military occupation's participation in the island economy was to be minimized, and private enterprise would take over, presumably under some form of continuing American rule. Meanwhile it was to the American national interest that the civilians be as self-supporting as possible. Civilian labor constituted but one aspect of the military government's many economic interests, but it was pivotal because of its influence on all others.

Officially, all labor performed by interned civilians was voluntary. The first order issued for the island, Saipan General Order No. 1, declared, "All able bodied adult persons (except women with minor children) may volunteer to work for compensation, but the services of all male adults will be considered as subject to requisition under the principles of international law." In fact, those principles are extremely vague. The Hague Convention of 1907 merely provided that "enemy nationals could not be forced to work on military projects except on a purely voluntary basis for pay but could be hired or requisitioned with pay to work on non-military projects." The naval military government prided itself that no requisitioning of civilian labor ever occurred in Camp Susupe, but this primarily encompassed never having had recourse to the technical formalities of requisitioning. It ignored the realities of life in camp, just as the language of the Island Order never precluded women with minor children from working, nor boys as young as fourteen years of age. Rather, when registering in camp all civilians went through the charade of signing labor contracts offering their services "freely and voluntarily without force or coercion or the threat thereof." As pay for their labor they received the monetary remuneration fixed by the Economics Department and, in addition, were provided with food, shelter, health care, and physical protection.

Economics and the Labor Shibai

While in the early days of Camp Susupe the civilians had been told that their work was voluntary, this had become something of a *shibai* (facade, play acting), as evidenced by camp requirements that every registered worker must receive an authorization to be absent from assigned work. Normally this consisted of a medical excuse or special dispensation, such as for illness or death in the family. Unmentioned was the workers' loss of the food differential should they fail to turn out, and always residual was the unspoken apprehension of what else might happen to them should they challenge the labor system. In contrast, the civilian internment camp on Tinian employed the positive sanction of allotting bonus purchases at the trade store to those who worked an uninterrupted full month.

Night-time employment was particularly unpopular. In April 1945, seventeen men in the Japanese area who protested such work were charged with participating in an unlawful demonstration and each sentenced to thirty days' confinement at hard labor. The women in camp were more successful when registering their objections to night-time work. Initially three crews of civilian women had been assigned round-the-clock to meet the labor demands of the giant military laundry built close to the camp. After they failed to show up at midnight despite the importuning of their foremen, the "graveyard" shift from midnight to 08:00 was eliminated. The two other shifts continued, with women from the Japanese area constituting the bulk of the laundry labor force.

Soon after my arrival in Camp Susupe, I detected an undercurrent of resentment among the Japanese internees over this "voluntary" work. Reports of "soldiering on the job" filtering in to the military government from outside work assignments reflected the adverse influence of this attitude in their lack of dedication to their tasks. Later I was to participate in a labor project initiated in the Japanese area that was completely devoid of any sanction, and both the blithe spirit in which the civilian men joined in the undertaking and the quality of its outcome provided me with positive evidence of the difference and virtue of true

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voluntarism.

The Economics Department calculated prewar Japanese wages in terms of the Japanese yen's purchasing power and, after making deductions for food and shelter, used this as the basis for setting Susupe's pay scale. Rates were fixed at 35 cents a day for unskilled male labor, 50 cents for skilled; similarly females earned 20 or 35 cents a day. Orderlies, mess boys, and personal servants received the lower rate of 25 cents a day. The men occupying the highest post in each of the camp's three areas at first were paid the sum of \$20 a month, and in mid-December it was raised to \$30 a month. Initially civilians worked without any day off; later the work week stabilized at six days, with Sunday the day of rest. Similarly, the work period was reduced to eight hours, excluding time required for transportation to and from work, and for meals. For the normal work day, external laborers were picked up at the labor gate at a time fixed between 07:00 and 08:00, and with the shortened work period, were to be returned to camp no later than 17:00. For some of the internal workers in camp the work day started much earlier, as for the *suijiba* crews charged with the duty of lighting the cooking fires and preparing food for the workers' morning meal before they left camp.

The Labor Office's records showed fully three-fourths of the employed men as being engaged in unskilled labor, but only two-fifths of the working women. While this might indicate either that there was a lesser need for unskilled female labor or that a larger proportion of Japanese women than men were skilled, it could be attributed to a lower wage rate having been set for women, requiring them to be classed as skilled in order to earn 35 cents a day. The largest component of women workers in Susupe was employed as members of the *suijiba* crews, about half as large a cohort served as nurses and nurse's aides in the camp hospital, and a corresponding number worked externally in the military laundry.

In October 1944, less than four months after D day, of the near four thousand civilians registered in the central labor pool, half were employed outside the

camp, another third in camp, and private entrepreneurs and laborers—the last primarily civilians residing with their employers, mostly farmers—made up the balance. Antifraternization rules applied to work outside camp, and no cigarettes, candy, or food was to be given to civilian workers other than the noontime meal or ration. Conversation with civilians was to be restricted to essentials, and military personnel guarding them were directed to withdraw from their presence during the civilians' rest periods. Over time these work strictures were gradually relaxed, but though it is improbable that any GI ever suffered disciplinary action for failing to observe them, not so the unlucky civilians caught entering camp after work with anything incriminating on their person. For example, in May 1945 a man was sentenced to serve twenty days at hard labor and ordered to pay a fine of \$10 for unlawfully fraternizing, “to wit: purchase a carton of cigarettes for one dollar from a member of the Armed Forces at his place of employment, Signal Dept.”

Susupe's entire economy was structured around the military government's initial decision to fix pay scales for all civilians at a low rate pegged to the discounted prewar yen. Should the military government thereafter have sought to end the established system of free food distribution in the camp, and require the civilians to pay for their meals, as by privatizing the preparation and distribution of food, the pay scale would have had to be raised to implement the change. In turn this would have had an immediate impact on the schedule of prices that entrepreneurs were permitted to charge, for to ensure equity the Economics Department had established them at a rate that would “place the independent laborer and wage earner on a comparative basis.” Similarly, the earnings of civilians in the farm cooperatives would be affected, for the return they received for the produce they grew was tied to the same wage scales. A further reason for not making any such major change in food policy was that it would have required launching a massive program of welfare subventions, for many civilians were not

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gainfully employed so could not pay for the food they consumed. In Area 3, nearly half of the 13,500 Japanese internees were children under the age of sixteen, with a goodly proportion of them not living with parents or close relatives. Given all of these factors, it was better for the naval military government to avoid major economic change such as adopting a new basis for computing pay scales. To help meet camp costs the Economics Department looked to other means for diverting the income earned by internees.

For four months after D day, with nothing available in war-devastated Saipan for which internees could legally spend their earnings, the military government withheld payment of their wages. Meanwhile, it established trade stores staffed by civilians, and arranged for them to be stocked with the type of goods normally available in navy ships' stores, supplemented by merchandise ordered to be shipped to Saipan to meet the special needs of the internees. The opening of the trade stores in October reportedly had an immediate effect on camp morale, adding an entirely new dimension to the significance of work, and contributing to increased labor turnout. Initially the greatest civilian demand was for cloth and sewing equipment, soap, and cigarettes, in that order of preference. Rationing in the form of a monetary maximum that one person could spend helped to spread the limited supplies available. Soon sales were running from \$5,000 to \$6,000 a week. The range of goods offered continued to expand as navy ships brought in additional merchandise, but sought-after goods did not remain long on the store shelves and always remained a problem due to the uncertainties of shipping schedules and supplies running out. The naval military government both charged the trade stores for the merchandise brought to Saipan and had to approve the retail prices at which they were resold.

Within six months of their founding, the trade stores in all three areas of the camp were reorganized as cooperatives, the largest store in the Japanese area capitalized at \$20,000, and the others at much smaller amounts. In each area, no

civilian could subscribe for more than ten shares of the cooperative at \$10 a share, nor receive more than a 10 percent yearly return on the investment. As it is estimated that civilians in Camp Susupe earned over \$300,000 during the first fourteen months, the trade stores were assured of a steady clientele. Indeed, one of the officers in the military government proposed that an income tax be levied, justifying it on the basis that enemy aliens should not be making a profit, but it came to naught.

Part of the capital necessary to finance the cooperatives came from the American dollars the civilians received on the conversion of yen they had in their possession when coming into camp. The military government had found that civilians were trading their yen for any items they could procure from the GIs, so to end the practice it ordered the surrender of all Japanese money. Initially a maximum redemption of \$25.00 (500 yen) per person was permitted, and a receipt given for any unredeemed difference. Later in October, more than \$30,000 was additionally distributed for the unredeemed balance, but some yen remained undeclared. In February 1945, the military government declared all such unredeemed yen to be confiscated, so that technically any Japanese money still in the hands of the internees was now useless. However, for the civilians still concealing yen, doubtless in anticipation of a Japanese victory in the war, they still retained their prewar value. It is unknown whether this contributed to the cleavage among civilians in Area 3 after the emperor announced the end of the war, when some refused to accept the authenticity of the declaration.

From October 1944, when the trade stores opened, the number of qualified civilians registered in camp as available for work expanded over 50 percent. This increase was overshadowed by the number of independent entrepreneurs among them who by the war's end had increased almost 300 percent. Superficially, these data demonstrated the success of the naval military government's policy of encouraging private enterprise. Actually, the figures concealed the fact that now

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counted as entrepreneurs were civilians who had been previously paid on a piece-work basis but counted as employees. Before and after the change, the Economics Department supervised the locally managed businesses, fixed employment standards and prices, and continued to be both the source of most of the raw materials used and the purchaser of most of the services or goods produced.

In the early days of the camp, when in dire need of clothing for the internees, the military government hired platoons of women to use commandeered sewing machines. They were to alter parts of salvaged Japanese uniforms to make them suitable for civilian use and to fashion clothes and towels out of other salvaged war materials. With skilled hands these seamstresses also altered women's dresses donated and sent to the camp from Honolulu by the Red Cross. Later, when the trade store began stocking bolts of cloth, these same seamstresses dispersed throughout the camp as entrepreneurs. Responding to a wide array of orders, they made dresses cut to a simple design, more elaborate wedding gowns, shrouds for the dead, and many other items. Also, it was not long before nearly all males in Area 3, from tiny tykes to the aged, were sporting high-crowned hats with abbreviated visors, sewn in camp out of salvaged canvas and resembling those worn by the Japanese military. Given the identical hats worn by the males and the similarity of the women's dresses, a number even cut from identical bolts of cloth, the camp began to assume a degree of smartness that contrasted markedly with its nondescript appearance in the very early period when internees wore the tatters of whatever clothing they had on when first taking to the hills.

Barbers in all three areas of camp, a watch repairer in the Japanese area, and a cobbler and a masseur in Charan Kanoa were established as privately owned enterprises, charging prices fixed by the Economics Department, with all profits earned going to the proprietors. Besides these private businesses, the naval military government set up a number of camp enterprises, paid the managers wages,

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and turned their products over to the Economics Department for use in camp. Into this category fell the sewing machine and bicycle repair shops, and the blacksmith, cabinetmaker, sign painter, and bamboo rake and clothespin maker. They were physically arranged in a double row of shops known as the Ginza, an economic area just outside the main gate of the Japanese area. Probably most immediately affecting the internees—one internally and the other externally—were the bakery and the soap manufacturing enterprises. To the extent that requisite raw materials could be obtained through the Supply Department, there appeared to be no limit in camp to demand for their products. Within six months after D day, these two enterprises were turning out some three thousand loaves of bread, and over twelve hundred bars of soap each week. Rationing assured wide distribution of both within camp. As I remember them, both bread and soap were excellent, but diminutive in size, which probably was an element contributing to the demand for them remaining high.

Once the civilians began to be gathered in Camp Susupe, and shortly after the island was declared secured, a thriving market was found among the GIs for island handicraft. By July the necessary materials had been gathered, and soon pandanus mats, coasters, cigarette cases, purses, and decorated fans were being woven by Islanders. Wristwatch straps and ties were produced on small looms, and shells and seeds strung into necklaces. Production began on model outrigger canoes assembled out of the same woods from which their prototypes were built. Carolinian “monkey god” figures were carved out of *efil*, a very dense, heavy wood found on Saipan. Shortly, Japanese workers in Area 3 began producing some of these handicraft typical of the Pacific Islands, supplementing them with Japanese-style products. Dolls dressed in Japanese kimono of salvaged traditional cloth, oriental lanterns, bamboo cut and curved into innumerable useful shapes, even Japanese paintings on salvaged parachute silk and samples of Japanese calligraphy all found ready sale among the GIs.

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At first the handicraft workers were all camp employees, paid on a piece-work basis, but by November they were organized into formal cooperatives to encourage maximum production. However, they still remained under the watchful eye of the Economics Department. Approximately a year after D day, some one hundred Islanders in Charan Kanoa and a much larger number of Japanese in Area 3 were busily engaged in a thriving handicraft business. Where once at the height of battle on Saipan the American GIs were hell-bent on smashing anything that suggested a Japanese origin, now they were almost as vigorously competing among themselves for the limited opportunity to acquire and bring back to the United States some sample of Japanese handicraft as mementos of their time on Saipan.

The New Ku

A large open area in a far corner of Camp Susupe had been set aside for building the Japanese area's new *ku*. I never learned why the designation *ku* was selected rather than just continuing to use the term *dan*, as for the other administrative sections of the camp. Traditionally a Japanese town or village is divided into *ku* (wards) and probably the designation was intended to differentiate this area from the rest of the camp, marking a new era of furnishing improved housing for Japanese internees. If so, the policy was short-lived.

Three months after D day, 100,000 board feet of lumber destined for civilian housing arrived on Saipan, and the first internees to benefit were the Chamorros and Carolinians. In addition to rehabilitating some of the old, Japanese-built structures in Charan Kanoa damaged during the fighting, wooden duplexes were erected there, and by mid-November the indigenous Islanders had moved into more commodious accommodations, settling in according to family ties and preinvasion patterns. The Korean internees were next to receive new quarters, and for them long, low, one-room-wide, barracks-type buildings were constructed. To each of the 20-by-15-foot adjoining rooms were assigned eight to ten Korean civilians. Further housing effort then slowed, with only enough lumber remaining to erect what became the New Ku—despite the original intent that it would be the first of many. Ultimately, the dramatic ending of the war counter-indicated consideration of any further effort to replace the camp's ramshackle *shik'sha*.

The plans for the New Ku ambitiously proposed more covered shelter, as well as open space, per Japanese civilian than was available in the older portion

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of the camp. The low, spare buildings were to follow the model of those in the Korean area, except that some would be only 150 feet by 20 feet and others twice as long. About fifteen Japanese would be assigned to each room, a greater density than in the Korean area. The buildings would be strung like a necklace around the four sides of a sizable, open quadrangle, with the door and wooden shutter for the unglazed window of each room opening onto the central court. In addition to the wells and cemented public bathing and washing aprons surrounding the buildings within the quadrangle, the roofs of four elevated toilet structures would loom prominently over everything, replacing the many odoriferous open-pit *benjo* found in the rest of the camp. Miracle of miracles to a camp devoid of the comfort of protective screening against flies and other insects, the windows of the toilet structures would be covered with wire mesh. The new-style toilets would empty into septic tanks dug beyond the end of the *ku*. A *suijiba* built along conventional lines would complete the normal complement for such an administrative section, but the Japanese civilians desired, and through their own efforts obtained, more.

As the dimensions of the New Ku gradually took shape, the officials of the *yakuba* contacted me and proposed that separate cooking sheds be permitted, so that the occupants of each room could have the ability to prepare their own meals. I knew that to a certain extent this was already going on in camp at makeshift fireplaces, frequently in the form of reheating *suijiba*-distributed food, and brewing coffee and tea. I dutifully communicated the request up the chain of command. It received the anticipated cold-water response: there were insufficient building supplies, cooking sheds would present a fire hazard, and if all internees were to be free to build their own facility, the resultant cacophony of sheds would destroy the architectural symmetry of the proposed *ku*. Undaunted, the *yakuba* then enlisted the services of the Japanese draftsmen employed by the Public Works Section, and soon presented sketches and blueprints for uniform

cooking sheds to be erected equidistantly and away from the buildings, both to minimize the fire danger and to assure the maintenance of proper architectural decorum.

The next rejection stressed as negating elements the absence of the necessary materials and the cost of required labor, beside adding, almost incidentally, disagreement with some of the structural features proposed for the cooking sheds. Now the *yakuba* played what I knew were its trump cards: the Japanese civilians in camp were quite amenable to a modified version of the cooking shed, they would donate their labor on Sundays to build them, and prior to that they would dismantle the buildings being abandoned by the US military elsewhere on the island and bring the salvaged lumber back to Susupe for the construction. Requested was the naval military government's permission to proceed. The result was capitulation, if I would be responsible for assuring that the *yakuba* would implement everything as proposed. Completely unmentioned in this exchange of communications was the spinoff impact this innovation would have in modifying the routine of food preparation followed in the camp. Now all that would be necessary was for me to obtain the concurrence of the Motor Pool for use of its vehicles on Sundays, requisition a supply of wrecking tools each weekend from the Public Works Section, and assure that the clerks of the *suijiba* were alerted to arrange for food to be prepared for a noonday meal when the internees would be away from camp, all this beside the *yakuba* assembling the necessary work crews.

Early on the first appointed Sunday morning, I rendezvoused with a group of civilian drivers from the Motor Pool, and at the steering wheel of a borrowed jeep, led some dozen trucks to the camp gate. There a crowd of waiting men eagerly climbed aboard, tools in hand. Out we drove, my jeep at the head of the procession. Some of the civilians had not been far from camp since internment, and the festive air of being on a picnic soon engulfed the entire work crew. Our

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destination was the former Station Hospital overlooking Magicienne Bay on the other side of the island, which for a while had cared for the civilians from Camp Susupe with serious medical conditions. Now all of the wooden buildings were abandoned. Once on the site, everyone seemed to derive a special pleasure from physically attacking the former wards. Indeed, some had to be reminded that the rationale for their being there was to return with salvageable lumber and only incidentally with broken pieces suitable for firewood.

Loaded up, the procession triumphantly returned in the afternoon, horns blowing as the trucks reached camp. With the wood neatly piled and the firewood distributed among the various *dantai*, the civilian workers dispersed, and I accompanied the trucks and their drivers back to the Motor Pool. My next three Sundays were similarly fully occupied, thereby complying with the camp rule that Japanese civilians could not leave Susupe except when accompanied by a member of the American armed forces. In retrospect, I shudder at the thought of what might have been the consequences for me if any of those trucks had been wrecked, or even if the borrowed tools whose requisition I had so cavalierly authorized had not been returned. Fortunately no untoward incident dispelled the euphoria that characterized this phase of the cooking-shed project. Even the weather seemed to smile on the endeavor.

It was now up to the *yakuba* to carry on with the building of the cooking sheds. On weekends, civilians with carpentering skills, using tools borrowed from the Public Works Section, cut the salvaged lumber to predetermined lengths and assembled it. The schedule they followed somewhat resembled the factory line being used to construct the New Ku's long barracks buildings. Nails and other necessary materials were obtained from the Supply Department. The sheds were sited in the central court side of each barracks, separated from each other and the barracks in conformance with the plan submitted by the *yakuba*. Early in this phase, one cooking shed was hurried to completion as a model, so that it could

be inspected, and future sheds modified should it be found wanting. As to be expected, the construction phase proceeded slowly, lacking the picnic air of the lumber salvaging operation, but gradually a thin line of cooking sheds took shape inside the open court. One of the steps necessary before completion of each shed was filling the sand bed on its cooking shelf, a flat rectangular space wide and long enough for several persons to build cooking fires under the roof without risk of burning down the structure. This final step became a symbolic topping-off ceremony, and for its sand was obtained from the adjacent beach.

On the weekends the cooking-shed project continued, and simultaneously work on the New Ku buildings proceeded during the week, with frames, siding, windows, and doors cut at the Public Works yard and assembled at the *ku*. The intention was to have the sheds completed by the time the barracks were ready for occupancy. It seemed to take an inordinate amount of time to conclude work on the New Ku, and then for the naval military government to fix a date for civilians to be moved in. There was even talk of painting the outside walls of the new barracks, but eventually this extravagance was abandoned. Meanwhile the barracks buildings remained empty, and the cooking sheds, although now all completed, unused.

Finally, with the war over, orders were received to mount the *hegira* and move approximately a thousand Japanese civilians over to the New Ku. Most were to come from a designated overcrowded *dan*. To the Registration Office fell the task of selecting the internees and specifying the rooms they were to occupy. A further delay ensued to accommodate those who for legitimate reasons wished to remain in the older portion of Area 3, or desired to change their assigned billeting. Finally, early on the appointed day, a long, continuous ribbon of men, women, and children slowly wound through camp over to the New Ku, carrying, dragging, or wheeling in handcarts all of their earthly possessions. For some the trip had to be repeated several times, so bulky were the personal

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possessions they had amassed during their period in camp.

The internees took easily to the transfer, for one thing because they now enjoyed roomier, less crowded accommodations. A number eagerly set about reorganizing their living styles and cooking the food for their own meals in manners more pleasing to their taste than was possible under the mass preparation and distribution methods of the camp's *suijiba* system. For them it was necessary to establish the equivalency of per person food allotments, a process facilitated by the routine I had earlier introduced into Area 3 of requiring the public reporting of daily food deliveries to each *suijiba*. Rather than starting with raw ingredients, others received their food in cooked form each day and then reheated and supplemented it with foodstuffs purchased from the cooperative trade store. Instead of insisting on uniformity, the *yakuba* deliberately allowed such diversity to at least partly counter the endemic complaints over camp food.

The women who did not leave camp on labor details, but remained home during the day, provided another demonstration of the New Ku tenants settling into their new quarters. They organized into groups responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the New Ku, and turned to with a fanatic commitment. Seemingly, to each of them a single blade of grass in the large central court was almost a personal affront, and they could be seen on hands and knees, under the hot Saipan sun, carefully scrutinizing the ground and plucking out any green shoot having the temerity to thrust itself into the light. The intent was commendable, but the consequences of the effort were sometimes nearly catastrophic. The New Ku had been built on silty ground, soil far finer than beach sand. Whenever the wind blew, it would stir up clouds of dust that would settle on the laundry hanging out to dry and infiltrate all rooms not sealed by tightly closing their doors and shuttering their windows. Of course, so closed up, the heat of the day made staying indoors nearly unbearable. Try as I might to reason with the head of the *ku* that the women should not denude the central area—and, rather, plant a thick

species of temple grass native to Saipan—I found myself unable to sway anyone. These women had for too long been exposed to the norm that equated cleanliness with bareness, and apparently, bareness with beauty.

The four wooden toilet buildings with their roofs towering prominently in the central court represented a triumph of applied ingenuity. To compensate for a total absence of toilet fixtures—Japanese or Western—available for use in Area 3, a long, exaggerated bathtub-like trough was constructed of cement on the ground. Above it, in the wooden floor that served as the ceiling of this catchment pit, the carpenters fashioned two parallel rows of ten holes, over which the internees could squat, the male and female sections separated from each other by a long plank wall. At one end of each toilet structure, two showers ran continuously, with the water from them flowing into two iron drums, pivoted off-center. As the drums filled with water, the weight would cause them to tilt and empty their contents in a heavy splash into the pit below. Periodically this would flush all of the excrement in the pit out through the pipes laid on the ground to the septic tanks at the edge of the *ku*. Even these sewer pipes embodied a nod to American ingenuity: lacking any allocation of metal or vitreous pipe to the Japanese area, the engineer in charge of Public Works adapted his experience with the US Civilian Conservation Corps. After tarring one side of a number of long boards, he fashioned sets of four of them together into a box-pipe, tarred surfaces inside, joined these wooden “pipes” one to another, and laid the whole sewer—not flat on the ground but on one of its diamond edges to speed the flow of the effluent to the septic tanks. Every thirty or so feet he had wooden sewer boxes built into the system, so that if necessary they could be used to clean out the sewer.

The occupants of the New Ku soon became accustomed to climbing up the steps and using the elevated toilets. And the youngsters of the area soon discovered that the toilets could be adapted for a game wholly unforeseen by their

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builders. The children would drop their wooden *geta* (shoes) into the holes of the toilet and wait until the water from the suspended tank flushed them out of the pit. Riding the wave of water like little boats, the *geta* would then move through the sewers, to be retrieved at the closest sewer box as they came floating by. It would have been an innocent enough way for the children to pass the time but for the fact that the sewer system had a very low gradient, due to the lay of the land. The *geta* would occasionally clog the wooden pipes, which would then have to be cleaned out—a very noxious and distasteful duty.

The action of Americans in directing the carpenters to erect the privacy wall in the toilets and separate the sexes was fully consonant with the general attitude of many of Susupe's military government administrators. They viewed the mores of the Japanese, especially those in camp, as inferior to American. Not until years later, when I lived for a period in Japan and was introduced to both the practice of communal bathing and unisex toilet facilities, did I come to appreciate how foreign to the Japanese internees the separation of the sexes in the new toilet structures must have seemed. Nevertheless, not much more than a month after the move to the New Ku, the *yakuba* was waited on by a delegation of women. Indignantly they demanded that camp carpenters cover every knothole in the partition separating the male and female sections in each of the toilets. "Little boys" in the men's side were using the holes to spy on the women as they used the facilities! These complaints demonstrated how malleable some Japanese mores could be, and how quickly attitudes might be adapted in situations where American mores dominated. Was this a portent of what could be expected in the home islands of Japan under the MacArthur regime?

Minami Tori Jima and the Swords

The adventitious combination of a covetous American navy commander being stationed on Saipan and an unknown number of Japanese starving to death on a barren island a week's sailing time away provides the setting for my last assignment with the naval military government unit headquartered at Camp Susupe. The Gilbert and Sullivan element that weaves its way through this half-century old memory serves to cloak the serious potential at that time inherent in the acceptance of the surrender of Minami Tori Jima (literally, South Bird Island).

A glance at a chart of the North Pacific discloses that the Northern Marianas are the geological continuation of a long stretch of archipelagos running southward from Japan, frequently with many miles of open ocean separating them. Apart from this sweep of islands, and nearly a thousand miles to the northeast of Saipan, is a solitary island on the Tropic of Cancer. Marcus—for that is its English name—is a flat, barren speck of an island with an area not much larger than the long, crisscross runways of the military airfield the Japanese had constructed there. Reconnaissance photographs showed that these enemy installations had been decimated by American air strikes, and occasional naval bombardment beginning in 1944. Huge craters pocked the runways and made them totally unusable. As new B-29 crews arrived in the Marianas, routinely their baptismal bomb run would be to Marcus before they began participating in the saturation raids over Japan. By the end of the war, the island had for long been so completely isolated that not even submarines were able to bring in emergency food supplies. General MacArthur's headquarters in Japan sent word to Saipan that the starving personnel on Marcus were in dire need of relief. The intelligence

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estimates available on Saipan indicated that they could include Japanese and Korean laborers caught there by the war. At this point the naval military government entered the story, as did Saipan's commodore.

The rank of commodore, long retired by the US Navy, was briefly reinstated for World War II. A vague reputation of having passed his prime characterized the navy commodore assigned to duty on Saipan. I had occasionally seen him "barrelling" around the island in a "souped up" jeep, garishly decorated with extra chrome fittings. The intelligence estimates indicated that Marcus was under the command of a Japanese admiral, and the commodore was determined not only to participate in its surrender, but personally to receive the admiral's sword. About this time nonbombing flights to Japan were becoming commonplace, and it was decided to expand the scope of the relief operation by rehabilitating the airfield on Marcus to permit its use in emergencies by American planes off route to and from Japan. A destroyer escort that was in Saipanese waters would be sent to Marcus for the surrender, and it would be augmented by a marine detachment as added protection. An Air Corps "Acorn Unit" would follow in slower landing craft loaded with earthmoving equipment to restore the airfield. The commanders of Susupe's Japanese and Korean areas would receive orders to travel aboard the destroyer escort to attend to the civilians reportedly on Marcus. In addition, my duties would include interpreting as necessary.

Established communications between Saipan and Marcus did not exist. Presumably the MacArthur Headquarters would inform the Japanese military authorities in Tokyo that Saipan was dispatching the small flotilla, but it was unknown to Saipan how those marooned on Marcus would respond. To Camp Susupe's interpreters fell the collective assignment of crafting an ultimatum directing the Japanese on the island to signal that they were surrendering and were awaiting the arrival of the American ships. We understood full well the substance of the message to be communicated, but the choice of Japanese words to be used and

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the style adopted seemed crucial. To assure the message we formulated was appropriately phrased, we enlisted the cooperation of the civilian in Area 3 who was the reporter for the *Marianas Hiho* and in whom we all had confidence. The final product directed that two white panels be laid crosswise on a designated Marcus runway to signify receipt of the communication and full intention to comply with its terms. Next, Saipan despatched a plane to drop the message on Marcus. The commodore was too impatient to wait on Saipan until a reply was received, and the destroyer escort set sail.

Each day as we drew closer to Marcus a plane flew up from Saipan to visually check the airfield, and each day as it returned overhead it radioed to us the absence of any response. We reduced speed, and with only one day left before we would be in sight of Marcus, the returning plane finally confirmed that the crossed panels had been laid on the ground. The low, treeless outlines of Marcus appeared on the horizon the following day, and as it drew closer we could not distinguish a single standing structure. The destroyer escort dropped anchor in the lee of the island, on the side where a small passage had been blasted through the fringing reef leading to a narrow landing slip on the beach. Just the day before we had received a delayed message relayed from Saipan that General MacArthur's headquarters had granted permission for a Japanese coastal destroyer to bring food to Marcus. Barely had we anchored, put a ladder over the side, and secured a motor whaleboat to it, when the rust-streaked Japanese destroyer showed around the flank of the island, steaming very slowly toward us. The skipper of the destroyer escort attempted to establish communications with it, initially by radio and then by blinker and flag, without success.

I then assumed my first and only command of an American naval vessel. "Meller," the destroyer escort skipper ordered, "take the ship's boat and tell the captain of that Japanese destroyer to stop and come over here." Down the ladder I went, jumped into the motor whaleboat, and told the coxswain at the tiller to

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steer for the Japanese ship. As we approached it over a choppy sea, while it slowed to bare steerage way, I struck a heroic stance in the bow of the whale-boat, struggling to retain my balance with my hand raised like a policeman stopping traffic. "Tomate!" (Stop!) I shouted as we drew closer, and the heads of several Japanese crewmen could be seen looking down on us from the rail. I yelled that their captain should come aboard the American destroyer, and saw the heads bunch as if conferring. Another head joined them, this one wearing an officer's cap, and I repeated my message. Then all the heads disappeared, and whether or not my message was understood I could not know. Meanwhile the Japanese ship continued slowly on, and then with a loud clanking of chain and in a cloud of rust, it dropped anchor. I decided to return to the destroyer and see whether the Japanese captain would appear.

After a short wait, a small boat put out from the Japanese destroyer, carrying its captain and a young enlisted man. As the latter climbed up our ship's ladder behind his captain, I noticed that squeezed tightly under his arm and close to his chest he held a black-jacketed copy of Kenkyusha's bulky Japanese-English dictionary. The same publication had been issued to me in my first days at the navy language school years before, along with many others, and I had brought it with me in case of need. I could not but look on the Japanese youngster as a somewhat kindred spirit.

It developed that the Japanese captain had a freighter on the Japan-Seattle run before the war. For Marcus he was carrying a cargo of mostly dry food, and corrugated iron sheets for use as roofing. Conversation proceeded amicably over coffee in the wardroom, with the several enlisted men from US Army Intelligence aboard for the Marcus surrender negotiations carrying the burden of the interpreting. As best I can recall, no question was raised about the Japanese captain's wartime service, nor did he volunteer anything about it.

The following day a Japanese landing barge carrying a two-man delegation

Minami Tori Jima and the Swords

representing the Island High Command put out from Marcus and drew alongside. The officer in charge was a Japanese army colonel who was second in command on Marcus, a diminutive man with a strutting gait, short-cropped hair, a small bristling mustache, and as bristly a manner of speech. In sharp contrast with the amiability of the previous day, formality distinguished this encounter. After the two Japanese were ushered into the wardroom and seated at one end of the table, as if on cue they reached into the briefcases they carried and each brought out a round, paper-wrapped package. Immediately the marine guards on the alert at the other end of the wardroom shouted a warning and drew their revolvers. Bombs! For a tense moment time froze.

A hurried explanation disclosed that there was a melon in each of the packages, and the guns were returned to their holsters. A small, white-skinned melon was the only edible crop that would grow on Marcus, and the few fruit the vines did produce were reserved exclusively for the officers. They were bringing *omiyage* (gifts). Years later, when I lived in Japan, I came to appreciate the significant role of the *omiyage* in social intercourse and the particular appropriateness of the melon in fulfilling this function. But the monetary expense of the melons in Japan, hardly equaled in personal cost the offering of such an *omiyage* on Marcus, where people were dying for want of food.

Once matters were sorted out, the gifts presented and accepted, the parties settled down to the immediate business at hand. All portable Japanese weapons on Marcus would be collected and surrendered to the American forces, all ammunition secured, all mined areas on the island defused. Everything on Marcus would be open for inspection. When the US Navy landing craft arrived, full cooperation would be extended to the Air Corps Acorn Unit in rehabilitating the airstrips, and later in their use for emergency landings by American planes. Formal surrender of Marcus would take place on board the destroyer escort at a time to be set by the Americans, and the admiral would participate. As the

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meeting drew to a close, the destroyer's skipper ordered the supply of foodstuffs, which had already been assembled, and to which at the last moment had been added perishables from the ship's reefers, to be loaded onto the Japanese barge for the delegation to take back. Down the ship's ladder the Japanese officers climbed, with the understanding that an American party would come ashore as soon as the mines protecting the landing beach reefs were deactivated.

When I did walk around on Marcus, it became evident that the aerial photographs recording the devastation of the island failed to reveal the massive labyrinth of deep, dank, underground bunkers, connected by a network of passageways, that now housed its garrison. Seemingly they were little touched by the surface destruction, other than the few whose ceilings were now open to the sky. Large caliber, English-manufactured guns, which along with their platforms had been transferred to Marcus from Singapore after it fell to the Japanese, still remained fully operational guarding the outer defenses of the island. It was apparent to me that they could easily have blown our destroyer escort out of the water if we had originally stood in close to the island before the crossed white panels were laid out on the Japanese airstrip as signals of capitulation, as reportedly our commodore impatiently favored as we sailed to Marcus.

That first trip onto the island also confirmed what I had suspected: there were only Japanese military personnel on Marcus and no civilians, either Korean or Japanese. For my colleague from Camp Susupe who was commander of the Korean area, Navy Lieutenant Jack Taylor, the assignment to Marcus became a total waste of time, and he soon obtained orders to return to Saipan. But when I sought similar permission, I found that my Japanese-language skills were to keep me on Marcus for a while longer.

Japanese army barges had now begun ferrying runs between the Japanese destroyer and the island, piled high with straw-sacked rice. A platoon of Japanese military was drawn up in single file at the landing area, waiting to transport the

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unloaded rice to a storage area. As I watched, a sack slipped from the grasp of a sailor and fell, its contents spilling out over the ground. To men long on starvation rations, the shock of seeing this was too great to bear, and the platoon broke ranks, the men rushing in to scoop up the rice with their hands. The Japanese lieutenant in charge sharply called them back, loudly reprimanding them. As soon as they were again lined up, now at attention, he proceeded to stride down the front of the platoon, harshly slapping each man across the face as he passed by. I doubt that this was intended to impress the watching Americans, but was rather an automatic reflex application of appropriate Japanese military discipline.

For the brief surrender ceremonies that occurred aboard the destroyer escort, I had no interpreting duties, as this responsibility fell to the two men from army intelligence aboard for that purpose. Prominently displayed on the table at which the Japanese officers signed the surrender documents was the admiral's sword. All officers on *Marcus* were likewise ordered to surrender their swords, which several days later they did, each in a slim wooden box bearing on its cover in *kanji* (Japanese characters) the rank and name of its owner. By the terms of the surrender, all binoculars, telescopes, artillery sighting devices, and comparable other detachable military equipment were similarly to be delivered. When received, the swords were housed in a separate tent, but the detachable equipment was just piled up on the ground, and there it remained, open to the elements, for the entire period I was on the island.

About the time the Japanese coastal destroyer completed transferring its cargo to shore, weighed anchor, and departed for Japan, the large American landing craft dispatched from Saipan showed up. With consummate skill their skippers maneuvered their ships in line into the island's narrow harbor channel and to the landing slip on shore. One by one they opened their clamshell bows, their cargo of loaded trucks and earthmoving equipment was driven right off and onto land, and the landing craft reversed engines and backed out. The marine

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The surrender aboard ship on Marcus. The Japanese army officer seated to the left is the colonel, second in command on the island. In the middle is the admiral, whose sword is in the box on the table. At right is the naval commander about whom the story of the robe is told. (US Army)

contingent also set to work immediately, erecting tents on the end of one landing strip—enough to accommodate all the Americans ashore including themselves, the Air Corps Acorn Unit, and the miscellany of persons like me temporarily assigned to duty on Marcus. The several rows of tents were supplemented by a galley to feed everyone, auxiliary power generators, desalination equipment, and sanitation facilities, a self-sufficient encampment. I looked forward to the prospect of again being able to sleep at night on a stable bed, but the events of the next few days were to allow me little uninterrupted opportunity for that.

No sooner had we settled into our tents than one of the Air Corps officers reported to the Acorn Unit commander that he had stumbled onto a plot among the Japanese on Marcus to drive the Americans into the sea. While poking around the Japanese bunkers he had struck up a conversation with a Japanese

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Meller in front of a Japanese tank on Marcus, with tents in background.
(Courtesy of Norman Meller)

noncommissioned officer who prior to the war had attended the University of California at Los Angeles. The Air Corps officer was a faculty member at that university, and so he had been told this confidential information. The lieutenant colonel in charge of the marine detachment was immediately alerted. The next thing I knew, about a dozen Japanese light tanks were clanking around the tents, positioned to encircle the encampment. I was then reassured to see US Marines climbing out of the tanks. They had found them in protected revetments and had commandeered all of those still operational. How the marines were able to squeeze into the minuscule interiors of the tanks to steer them was difficult to fathom. Nor did I know whether the tanks' machine guns were still operational, so they could be turned against the Japanese to repel an attack. Nevertheless, the mere interpositioning of their iron sides around the tents, like wagons encircling an encampment of western pioneers, lent a false sense of security. A twenty-four-hour armed guard was posted, and only when the scare abated, was it reduced to the night hours.

There was little need for interaction between the Japanese and Americans

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once the latter were on the island and repair of the airfield was under way, but a degree of fraternization inevitably occurred as the Japanese solicited American cigarettes and men from both sides sought to trade. Any Japanese personnel approaching the encampment at night would be immediately challenged by the marine guards. Since there might be a reasonable explanation for the Japanese presence, I would be called on to interpret. Fairly quickly, it was established that any Japanese wishing to establish contact would use the password "Meruru" (my name in *kata kana*, one of the Japanese syllabaries), and I would be called by the marine guard. For the next few nights I rested only fitfully, for it seemed that I would just fall asleep before again being awakened. During the day I would similarly be asked to interpret when transcultural difficulties engendered misunderstandings.

The size and capacity of the earthmoving equipment brought in by the Air Corps Acorn Unit amazed the Japanese. After locating beds of what it called "live" coral, that is, strata of coral sufficiently soft to be surface-mined, the unit's behemoths would rumble down into these pits, fill up their gargantuan bellies with scooped-up coral, and then waddle out and over to the bombed-out strips, there to dump their loads in the holes, and return to repeat the process. Large bulldozers brought from Saipan would level the piled-up coral, and after it had been watered down, giant rollers would compact it. Just as the Japanese civilians were fascinated by the army's road-building film one evening months earlier in Camp Susupe, so the Japanese military personnel on Marcus watched open-mouthed at the sight of this modern American equipment in action.

One afternoon while in my tent I heard a low, muffled explosion. Word quickly spread that a bulldozer had hit an unexploded bomb, which had badly injured its driver as well as wrecked the dozer. I thought relatively little of it at the moment, but soon I was called on by the Japanese army colonel, the Marcus Island second in command. He had come to explain that they were entirely

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unaware a bomb was there. The explosion was not due to a mine they had failed to defuse; the detonation was entirely accidental. Would I please so inform the Acorn Unit's commander? It was obvious he was worried, even scared, that some serious punishment would be ordered by the Americans. I communicated the verbal message and his expression of regret to the commander. After an informal inquiry, the matter was dropped as due to hitting an unexploded aerial bomb. However, I could only wonder what the reaction would have been if the parties had been reversed, with a Japanese military officer in command.

Life on Marcus for the American personnel was not a pleasant picnic. For one thing, during the day there was little shade. In the evening, to break the monotony the Acorn Unit commenced showing American movies it had brought with it. The Japanese admiral was invited to attend, and Japanese personnel crowded in on both sides of the assembled Americans. My seat was between the Acorn Unit commander and the Japanese admiral, for whom I would attempt to supply a running commentary in Japanese, acquainting him with the gist of what was transpiring on the screen. All appeared to go well, as far as I was concerned, and he seemed to enjoy the shows. Then the admiral offered to reciprocate by having his personnel project Japanese films that were on the island. Of course they were solely in the Japanese language, without English subtitles, and none of them were old Japanese chestnuts like the *Forty-seven Ronin*, with whose plots I was long familiar. So I found myself desperately trying to explain to the Acorn Unit's commander, sitting on one side of me, what was happening in some modern Japanese movie replete with colloquialisms, while the admiral on the other side of me, sotto voce, was volunteering comments. I shudder to think of how relationships between the actors in the films were misconstrued and nuances misinterpreted. Fortunately for me, the American personnel much preferred English-language films, so few Japanese movies were projected.

During this period, I also experienced a new perspective on the relative status

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of enemies once hostilities are over. The lieutenant colonel in charge of the US Marine detachment while in service before the war had been in Singapore at the same time as a Japanese navy commander on the admiral's staff. Whether they were personally acquainted there was never clear to me. As an act of military courtesy the commander invited the colonel to join him for dinner at his quarters, and, under the excuse of requiring an interpreter, the colonel asked that I be permitted to accompany him. Actually the Japanese naval officer's command of English was adequate enough for such an occasion, so my presence may have been really intended to raise the colonel's status by having staff accompany him. An orderly of the Japanese commander prepared the dinner, and I could not help but wonder if the ingredients in the *sukiyaki* were not part of the massive food package the destroyer escort had contributed. I found the food tasty, and warm *saki* (rice wine) added to the enjoyment. During the dinner the Japanese commander wore a blue silk lounging robe, which he said he had obtained in Singapore. The colonel expressed admiration of the robe, and pointedly remarked that he regretted his missed opportunity to acquire a similar one. The following day, the commander's orderly called at my tent with a carefully wrapped gift for the colonel. It was the silk lounging robe.

The requests for the services of "Meruru" markedly decreased, and soon there was little for me to do by way of interpreting. Work on the airstrips was proceeding routinely. With food once again available, health conditions on Marcus had noticeably improved, and no longer did small boats quietly put out in the early morning through the reef to bury at sea their once-human cargo. Then abruptly the calm was broken. Up to my tent stormed the Japanese army colonel, the island's second-in-command. Obviously angry, he drew himself up to full height, pushed his bristly mustache within a few inches of my chin, and while waving a piece of paper in his left hand, poked me on the chest with the index finger of his right hand to emphasize his words. "Give back our swords," he

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shouted. That I was taken aback is an understatement, for I did not have the least idea of why he was objecting now to the Japanese officers having surrendered their swords. Given his size, I did not feel physically intimidated. The thought very briefly crossed my mind of whether I as an American navy officer should allow a Japanese officer, by so acting, to demean the authority of the United States.

I immediately ordered the colonel never to yell at me or rap me like that again. His response was to thrust at me the paper he was carrying and simultaneously shout that General MacArthur in Tokyo had ordered that all Japanese military being repatriated from the South Pacific be allowed to return with their household effects. That, declared the colonel, meant the officers on Marcus had been tricked and should have their swords back.

My reply was that if, indeed, the MacArthur Headquarters had issued the order, the Americans on Marcus had not been informed of it. We did not have radio contact with Tokyo as apparently he had. In addition, it seemed to me the message was obviously being misconstrued by the Japanese on Marcus to include swords in the phrase "household effects." At the time I did not realize that in giving meaning to the contents of the MacArthur order I was responding to my full role as an interpreter. I concluded with the statement that I would bring the matter to the attention of the Air Corps Acorn Unit commander, but that nothing could change until communication was established with the MacArthur Headquarters. The colonel left in an ugly mood, and I immediately informed the Air Corps commander of what had happened. Quickly the marine detachment was alerted to post a twenty-four-hour armed guard around the American encampment. My tent adjoined the one containing the boxed swords, and I do not remember sleeping soundly. Relations between the Japanese and the Americans on Marcus remained tense until a message was received from the MacArthur Headquarters, via Saipan, that swords were not intended to be included in

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“household effects.”

With the crisis of the Japanese swords resolved, at least to the extent of clarifying the meaning of the MacArthur order, and there being little to keep me busy on Marcus, I was anxious to return to Saipan. As I computed, what with being married and having served overseas, by this time I had accumulated about enough “points” to be entitled to be sent back to the United States and demobilized. But the release from service would have to be arranged by individual letter sent to the chief of naval personnel through the chain of command, starting with the naval military government at Camp Susupe. Once again I requested permission to leave Marcus, and now received orders to embark on one of the landing craft from Saipan standing off the island. As I boarded it, I was met by a crew member inquiring if I had any dirty laundry. My clothes in the ship's washing machines and my body in a hot shower received their first scrubbing in weeks.

What happened next was almost an anticlimax to the Marcus assignment, and my years of duty in the Pacific. I declined the offer of a jump in rank if I would stay on Saipan until the Japanese civilians were repatriated. The flow of daily life in Camp Susupe continued while I waited for what seemed an interminably long period for my orders to return to the United States. When finally received, they directed that I sail the following day, and I hurriedly bid farewell to Mayor Shoji and Judge Yanigata. The navy transport was supposed to land at San Diego, but so many vessels loaded with returning military personnel were then heading to the west coast of the United States that San Diego could not process them all. San Pedro was our next designated destination, and for the same reason we continued to be rerouted toward ports further north until finally we landed at Seattle. After years in the balmy Pacific and with only light shirts and shorts to wear, I found myself walking down an uncovered gangplank shivering in a snowstorm. Despite this chilly reception, it was more than offset by the warming realization of being back home.

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* * *

Postscript: Long after I was discharged from the Navy and months after Camp Susupe's Japanese civilians were repatriated, a letter was forwarded to me from Mayor Shoji thanking me for the many courtesies I had extended to him while I was commander of Area 3. Elderly Judge Yanagita had died shortly after they had reached Japan. Conditions in Japan were very difficult, especially for those returning from overseas. He closed with a request that I convey his respects to my wife. Knowing how severe living arrangements had been on Saipan, but that he had never asked for special consideration for himself, despite this letter being written in Japanese it required no translation to read between the lines. My immediate response was to send a CARE food package. Years later, while living in Japan, my wife and I invited his widow to meet with us at our hotel for dinner. She proved to be as straight-backed physically, and in manners dignified, as her husband. Possibly as a fit measure of my Japanese language skills as recounted to her by her husband, she appeared with an English-speaking Catholic priest to interpret.

Glossary

<i>banzai</i>	a cheer or war cry; an all-out, desperate attack
<i>benjo</i>	latrine
<i>campo</i>	the air and sea bombardment that began four days before D day
<i>cha wan mushi</i>	a type of custard
<i>dantai</i>	administrative section or subdistrict
<i>dantaicho</i>	section chief or administrative head
<i>furoshiki</i>	square Japanese cloth
<i>gaijin</i>	foreigner
<i>geta</i>	thonged slippers, like zori
<i>han</i>	the group occupying a barracks
<i>hancho</i>	leader of a <i>han</i>
<i>kanji</i>	Chinese characters used in Japanese
<i>katsubushi</i>	boiled, fire-dried bonito fillets
<i>ku</i>	wards
<i>kucho</i>	head of a ward
<i>maguro sashimi</i>	tuna fish <i>sashimi</i>
<i>manju</i>	Japanese-style cookies of flour dough filled with sweetened beans
<i>miso</i>	a fermented rice paste
<i>miso shiyo</i>	a soup made from <i>miso</i> , with shavings of <i>katsubushi</i> added
<i>muro</i>	baby mackerel
<i>naichijin</i>	person from the Japanese home islands
<i>nisei</i>	second-generation immigrants
<i>omiyage</i>	gifts

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<i>sashimi</i>	raw fish dipped in soy sauce
<i>sensei</i>	honored person; teacher
<i>shibai</i>	facade, play acting
<i>shik'sha</i>	barracks
<i>shiogara</i>	salted fish entrails
<i>suijiba</i>	cookhouse, kitchen
<i>suijicho</i>	chief cook
<i>suimono</i>	salt-cured pickled vegetables
<i>sukiyaki</i>	meat and vegetable stew
<i>sumo</i>	a Japanese form of wrestling
<i>tempura</i>	food, such as raw vegetables or shrimp, dipped in egg batter and cooked in hot oil
<i>yakuba</i>	internal Japanese civilian administration and its offices in Area 3

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