

Donald M. Goldstein, Katherine V. Dillon, eds.. *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans*. Washington, D.C., and London: Brassey's, 1999. x + 384 pp. \$21.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-57488-222-3.



Reviewed by Charles C. Kolb

Published on H-US-Japan (December, 1999)

Japanese Perspectives on the Pearl Harbor Attack, "Operation Hawaii"

The volume under review is a quality paperback reissue, printed on alkaline paper, of the 1993 hardcover edition that carries the same title. The book has been out of print for a number of years. Therefore, the editors and publishers should be applauded for reissuing this important scholarly treatise which documents the Japanese perspectives on the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack on the American fleet and naval facilities at Pearl Harbor, and the naval and marine air stations on Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. The Pearl Harbor Papers remain as the salient English-language source on the Japanese version of the strategies, tactics, and logistics of that event which drew the United States into the global Second World War.

The editors have assembled more than twenty original Japanese documents and diary extracts related to the attack and its aftermath, the Japanese carrier divisions, and Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Many of these documents, transcribed into English, are not available elsewhere, few have been published in Japanese, and many have

never before been available in English. In addition, the volume features a full-color reproduction of a unique, top-secret map prepared by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, the attack's lead aviator who compiled it on the basis of action reports during the return voyage to Japan aboard the carrier Akagi. Fuchida used this map in an imperial briefing to inform Emperor Hirohito of the results of the battle on 27 December 1941. The original map was discovered a decade ago and has been depicted only in *The Pearl Harbor Papers*.

These Japanese documents were selected from the Gordon W. Prange Collection, most of which is housed in the special collections of the McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland in College Park near Washington, D.C. Prange (1910-1980) was General Douglas MacArthur's official historian in Japan during the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952, and collected valuable historical material that had not already been burned by the Japanese armed forces. The Military History Section of Headquarters USAFFE (U.S. Armed Forces, Far East) was responsible for assembling political, diplomatic, and military docu-

ments, and conducting interviews with Japanese survivors. Following the occupation Prange was instrumental in having this unique and valuable collection to the university where he was Professor of History. In addition, the Prange Collection includes virtually everything published in Japanese on all subjects in Japan during the four initial years of occupation, 1945-1949. The collection contains books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, archival materials, censorship documents, and news dispatches collected by the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) of the Civil Intelligence Section of the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP). The collection also includes substantial English language materials about the office files of the CCD. Information about the contents of the collection, its availability, and finding aids may be found at the following URL, which has Japanese and English-language versions: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/PRC/prange.html> Some of Prange's papers, a photo archives, and unpublished manuscripts are in the possession of the senior editor of The Pearl Harbor Papers, Don Goldstein.

As MacArthur's senior historian, Gordon Prange was in a unique position to obtain papers and interviews that no one else was able to secure, and he also became acquainted with many of the ex-officers of the Imperial Navy who had played significant roles in the Japanese war effort. Some of these participants personally prepared summaries and "memory documents" for Prange. This corpus includes papers and manuscripts concerning Japanese politics, diplomacy, strategy and tactics, naval engagements, and the planning, preparation, and execution of the Pearl Harbor attack. A majority of the official Japanese documents had been destroyed during the Battle of Midway in June 1942 and many of the naval aviators and surface fleet officers were killed during that engagement or during the course of the war. Therefore, these primary sources are essential in order to understand the Japanese viewpoint about the war in the Pacific. The overwhelming

majority of the hundreds of books written about the Pearl Harbor attack reflects only the American assessment of that operation and neglects the Japanese perspective. This significant volume redresses that flaw.

Don Goldstein, the senior editor of this compilation, holds a doctorate in American, European, and Military History from University of Denver, and is currently Professor of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh in southwestern Pennsylvania. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, both retired U.S. Air Force officers, were Prange's associates in the preparation of numerous works on the war in the Pacific. Notably, Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon authored six books including *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); *Miracle at Midway* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); *Target Tokyo: The Story of the Sorge Spy Ring* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984); *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987); *December 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988); and *God's Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's [US], 1990). Goldstein and Dillon also co-authored *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki - 1941-1945*, translated by Masataka Chihaya (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), and *The Way It Was: Pearl Harbor - The Story and Photographs*, authored with J. Michael Wenger (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's [US], 1991), in addition to *The Williwaw War: The Arkansas National Guard in the Aleutians in World War II* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992).

More recently, Goldstein and Dillon collaborated on books about the Normandy invasion (6 June 1944), the Battle of the Bulge, and the Vietnam War. The trilogy of *At Dawn We Slept*, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History*, and *December 7, 1941*, regarded by many scholars as the traditional accounts of the Pearl Harbor attack as seen through American eyes, is now accompanied by

The Pearl Harbor Papers in which the Japanese viewpoint is documented. Goldstein and Dillon as long-time associates of Prange have admirably carried forth the work following Prange's untimely death, and Goldstein is regarded as his successor.

The Pearl Harbor Papers, originally published by Brassey's in 1993 and now reprinted, contains a preface, nineteen chapters divided into four parts, and a conflated eleven-page index of proper nouns and topical headings. There is some chronological overlap among the chapters since many of the documents concern the plans and preparations for "Operation Hawaii," the attack itself on "X" Day (8 December 1941), and an assessment of the results. Calendric dates used in the Japanese reports reflect time in Tokyo, located west of the International Date Line.

"Part I: Plans and Preparations for the Pearl Harbor Attack" (eight chapters) provides information regarding the organization and psychology of the Imperial Japanese Navy, including the Naval General Staff, Navy Ministry, and Combined Fleet, particularly Admirals Nagano, Nomura, Toyoda, and Yamamoto. The initial three chapters emphasize documents prepared by Minoru Genda, former Air Staff Officer of the First Air Fleet, who was the leading tactician and architect of the operation. His essays provide a detailed account of "Operation Hawaii" in the face of the battleship-minded Japanese naval officers who sought "The Great All-Out Battle." This strategy proposed that the U.S. Navy would be lured across the Pacific to be attacked by Japanese submarines on the way, and, once in Japanese waters, would be defeated by the surface fleet of the Imperial Navy. However, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto chose to execute Genda's daring plan. The first chapter considers the evolution of the carrier task force, the experiences gained by the "China Incident," tactics, training, and bombing efficiency. Pre-attack planning, preparations, and maneuvers comprise the

second chapter (an affidavit from Genda to Prange, 15 March 1948).

Chapters Three and Four (prepared on 12 May 1947) comprise an analysis of the attack. Among the topics reviewed are aircraft types and units, training, target selection, sea and air routes, supply at sea, the resolution of torpedo problems, an assessment of U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Kimmel, and operational orders. Among the topics documented in this chapter are preparations for the attack, the improvement of horizontal bombing, the torpedo attack plan, U.S. submarines, the formation of the fleet at the time of attack, the actual attack, battle reports, and damage assessment photographic analyses. Of particular interest, with minimal additional information, are references to the preparation of scale models of Oahu and Pearl Harbor, discussions of how to deal with torpedo nets, and the potential treat of barrage balloons at Pearl Harbor. There are useful tables documenting ships by name, kinds and numbers of aircraft, mission assignments, and the names of the commanders.

Part I also has excerpts (11 August 1941 - 3 January 1942) from the diary of Rear Admiral Gichi Nakahara, Chief of the Naval Ministry's Personnel Bureau. These report events, statistics, and Nakahara's candid opinions, including commentaries on the Russo-German war, Russo-Japanese relations, the internal political situation in Japan, German naval activities in the North Atlantic, Imperial Navy personnel projections, air defense, and naval strength and organization. In addition he remarks about the health of Admiral Nagano, concerns about Japanese losses at Wake Island (10-12 December), and Japanese submarine bombardments of the Hawaiian Islands (3 January). Two chapters contain extracts from the diaries or papers of Captain Shigeshi Uchida and Commander Sadamu Sanagi, both of whom were attached to the Operations Section, First Bureau, Naval General Staff. Excerpts from Uchida's diary and duty book cover the period from 15 November

1940 to 31 December 1941, and Prange also interviewed him on 27 April 1951. Of special note are the war games of 3-5, 8-10, and 11-20 September; 1-4 and 11-13 October; and on 15 November - the latter held in the Imperial Palace in the presence of the Emperor. Sanagi, an experienced air officer who had been an assistant naval attach in Washington, provided diary and papers on 9 February 1949 for an interview with Prange. His documents cover the period from September through December 1941.

Selections from the "General Outline of the Orders and Plans" of the attack (Japanese Monograph No. 97) complete Part I. The identity of the author(s) and original deposition date(s) are not recorded, and the text is reproduced from an English-language typewritten manuscript dated 1953 prepared by the Military History Section, Headquarters, Army Forces Far East. Navy Orders (Nos. 1, 5, 9, and 12), Navy Directives (Nos. 1, 5, and 9), Combined Fleet Operations Order No. 2, and Carrier Striking Task Force Operations Orders (Nos. 1 and 3) are reproduced along with charts showing the "Disposition of Forces" and the "Organization of Air Attack Units." There is also a map of the planned route of the carrier striking task force and an appendix revealing the Imperial Navy's planned actions.

"Part II: Letters and Correspondence of Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto" (three chapters) contains biographical information and examples of his correspondence, "Letters from Yamamoto," "Two Letters Written by Admiral Yamamoto That Were Considered Sufficient to Indicate His Personal Character," and "Admiral Yamamoto's Sweetheart." Eight letters document his pessimism about the national trend toward war, preparations for war, and operations policies and plans. The letters to Vice Admiral Shimada, Admiral Takahashi, Rear Admiral Hori, and Shigeharu Enomoto (a secretary of the Navy Department) reveal his personal side, as do several letters and an

assessment of Yamamoto's extramarital "love affair" with a former geisha, Chiyo Kawai.

"Part III: Pearl Harbor" (seven chapters) covers the actual attack. The initial chapter includes excerpts on operational planning and logistics taken from the book *Rengo Kantai* [Combined Fleet] by Ryunosuke Kusaka, Chief of Staff of the First Air Fleet (and former commander of the carrier *Akagi*). The book was published originally in April 1952 by the newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun*. Among the topics considered are the importance of intelligence operations in Hawaii, the sea route and refueling at sea, security measures, the scale model of Oahu, training at Kagoshima Bay, the formation of the Tojo cabinet (18 October 1941), diplomatic negotiations, and the 23 November briefing. Of note is the "Pearl Harbor Attack Plan" booklet, written by Genda, which Kusaka received in April 1941. Concerns about U.S. submarines, daily ship positions at Pearl Harbor, attack orders, and the "Climb Mt. Niitaka" and "Tora" messages are reviewed. Kusaka comments that Fuchida's detailed book, *True Story of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, is accurate and definitive. Therefore, this contribution outlines the operation from its inception to the return of the task force to Japan, and also includes Kusaka's statements regarding the need for and maintenance of Japanese radio silence.

Another chapter conflates Prange's interviews with and the diary of Sadao Chigusa, Executive Officer on the destroyer *Akigumo*, providing a view of the Kure Naval Base, the rendezvous at Hitokappu Bay, the task force's voyage to Hawaiian waters, and the homeward voyage. An organizational chart of the task force and eight drawings elucidate the narrative in which Chigusa, a Rear Admiral, considers fuel supplies, morale, sanitation, and damage reports. Masataka Chihaya, a long-time translator and informant for Prange translated the war diaries of three ship groups. Three chapters contain excerpts from diaries of the Fifth Carrier Division (*Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*,

commanded by Rear Admiral Chuchi Hara, 1-31 December 1941); the 1st Destroyer Division (nine destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Sentaro Omori, 1-31 December 1941); and the 3rd Battleship Division (Hei and Kirishima under the command of Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, 4-25 December 1941). Diary entries confirm daily latitude and longitude positions, and document that radio silence was maintained during the operation. The war diaries of the 1st and 2nd Carrier Divisions and Air Squadrons were lost at the Battle of Midway when the Akagi and Kaga (1st CD/AS) and Soryu and Hiryu (2nd CD/AS) were sunk. In the main, these documents record personnel issues, and reproduce status reports and messages, including reports on U.S. fleet activities from the Japanese consul general in Honolulu and the value of pre-war intelligence. Other notable entries include reports of U.S. submarine activities and detection and sinkings in Japanese waters. The editors remark that the diaries of the 1st Destroyer Squadron were "remarkably sparse" but that the documents from the Fifth Carrier Division and Third Battleship Division were more detailed, and the latter also contained enthusiastic entries about the attack and war plans. Task Force Signal Orders, Combined Fleet Operational Orders, and General Staff Telegrams are among the materials excerpted.

Extracts from "Submarine Operations, December 1941-April 1942" (Japanese Monograph No. 102, January 1952), prepared by Captain Tatsuwaka Shibuya, provide data on Japanese submarine construction and assignments, general operational plans, "Operation Hawaii," and submarine dispositions during the attack. Nineteen I-class and five midget submarines were deployed close to Oahu. Chapter Eighteen, "Lessons (Air Operations) of the Sea Battle off Hawaii," is a document prepared in August 1942 by Yokosuka Naval Air Corps provides a candid assessment of the Pearl Harbor attack. Major topics include tactics, "air duel fighting," attacking, reconnaissance, communications, and maintenance. Success was

due to "providential help," the American underestimation of Japanese strength, surprise, concealment of the plan, "supremacy of mental power," "crack units" thoroughly prepared, and torpedo attack training and personnel. The report also critiques the specific results of Japanese attacks by specific units, and provides recommendations for improvements in strategy, tactics, and equipment.

In "Part IV: Aftermath" (one chapter), a detailed report by Lieutenant Commander Masataka Chihaya entitled "An Intimate Look at the Japanese Navy" summarizes the Japanese naval successes and failures. This is a forthright analysis that is primarily factual rather than complaining, patronizing, or transferring blame. The Japanese concept of "One Big Battle" (e.g., win the war with one major naval battle) philosophy is assessed, as are the "confusion of thought," "narrow-sighted" plans, and "overpowering stupidity" among naval leaders. War operations, services (searching, scouting, patrolling, and protecting sea transport), and army and navy cooperation are reported. Problems cited include limitations on ship cruising radii and ammunition supplies, shortages of oil and aluminum, lack of freighters for transport, and diminishing numbers of qualified naval officers. Chihaya writes (p. 327) about American victories -- "they fought a grim fight and triumphed" our victories "took very much the nature of good luck." A section entitled "Lessons from the Battle of Hawaii" considers fuel supplies, aircraft damage, and the hazards of yet another attack on Pearl Harbor. Evaluations of naval engagements at Midway, Savo, Santa Cruz, Leyte Gulf, and Kommandorski are reviewed, and he states (p. 342) that "the [Imperial] Navy stuck to tradition to the last man all perished with the tradition!" Submarine and counter-submarine warfare, the transportation of war material (logistics), the Japanese "Sea Bee," manpower disposition, the "lack of harmony and unity" among the Japanese, and "the real merit of the American fighting forces" are considered in detail. Chihaya concludes "our navy has lost the war by 'battling' instead of 'warring'"

(p. 371); the "One Big Battle" philosophy - replicating the Battle of Tsushima in 1904 against the Russians - was ill-advised and not repeatable in 1941.

A careful reading of the documents and excerpts published in *The Pearl Harbor Papers* reveals that the Imperial Navy experienced some of the same strategic, tactical, and logistical difficulties at the U.S. Navy had to overcome - the development of effective torpedoes and aerial bombs, and efficient refueling at sea techniques. Indeed, the papers reveal the complexity of the Pearl Harbor operation, the planning, organization, training, coordination, and security measures that went into the plan.

I shall mention two topics of admittedly personal interest: 1) the effectiveness of the Japanese midget submarines and 2) the interception of Japanese naval task force messages by U.S. cryptanalysts before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Of special note is a sentence (p. 90): "The surprise air attack coupled with submarine attacks by the midget submarines solely contributed to this successful attack, which could only be done by the Imperial Navy." As students of the Pearl Harbor attack know, the effectiveness of the midget submarines in the harbor has again recently been questioned on the basis of enhanced photographic evidence of what appear to be torpedo tracks heading toward American battleships, suggesting that both air-launched and submersible-launched torpedoes were employed effectively. Unfortunately, Prange's questioning apparently did not elaborate this issue any further. One of Yamamoto's letters (7 January 1942) stated the "Japanese belief" that midget submarines had sunk an American battleship at Pearl Harbor (p. 113). Kusaka refers to the departure of thirty submarines and five midget submarines on 18 November, eight days before the task force left the homeland (pp. 146-147). One I-class submarine and all of the midgets were lost (pp. 270-277), but there is no evidence in the Japanese documents to suggest that the midgets launched successfully

any torpedoes or struck or sunk any U.S. naval vessels. As to the second point, radio silence was maintained by the Japanese task force throughout "Operation Hawaii," demonstrated by the fact that radio transmission fuses had been removed and radio keys had been sealed (p. 257, 278, 282). There is no evidence to suggest that any ships of the Japanese fleet sent any radio messages during the voyage to Hawaiian waters.

In their 1993 preface, the editors comment on the revisionist literature on the Pearl Harbor attack and the theory that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt knew about it in advance because codes had been decrypted, or that Churchill withheld information in order to ensure that the Americans would be drawn into the war (p. viii). The editors find these revisionist writings "unfounded." Revisionist histories are still being written - for example, Robert Stinnett's *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York, Free Press, 1999), published in November of this year. Stinnett maintains that the attack was a carefully orchestrated design, initiated at the highest levels of the American government, paralleling arguments put forth by the late Henry C. Clausen and Bruce Lee in *Pearl Harbor: The Final Judgment* (New York: Crown, 1992). *Day of Deceit* is not receiving favorable reviews. However, a most enlightening book is *Between Competence and Culpability: Assessing the Diplomacy of Japan's Foreign Ministry from Pearl Harbor to Potsdam* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997) written by Seishiro Sugihara, in which he documents the Japanese perspective on Japanese-American diplomacy, failures within the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and the importance of declassified materials from the Foreign Ministry relating to Pearl Harbor.

In sum, *The Pearl Harbor Papers* documents the Japanese perspective on "Operation Hawaii." There are no endnotes and very few footnotes (in the main, to amend or correct factual statements, such as an officer's rank). This compelling volume

contains a wealth of materials and is an essential resource for scholars and military history buffs in order to understand the Japanese strategies, tactics, logistics, and the over confidence of some naval officers and the concerns and skepticism of brother officers. In comparing the 1993 volume and current printing of *The Pearl Harbor Papers*, I perceive no changes; minor typographical errors are uncorrected (for example, p. ix: Minodu Genda should be Minoru Genda). The endpapers of the hardcover edition each had color reproductions of the Fuchida briefing map; the paperback reproduces the map attached to the front endpaper. Readers who are interested in learning more about the Japanese viewpoint should read Goldstein and Dillon's *Fading Victory: The Diary of Admiral Matome Ugaki - 1941-1945* (translated by Masataka Chihaya) published in 1991, which is also available in a quality paperback edition.

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-us-japan>

Citation: Charles C. Kolb. Review of Goldstein, Donald M.; Dillon, Katherine V., eds. *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans*. H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews. December, 1999.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=3645>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.