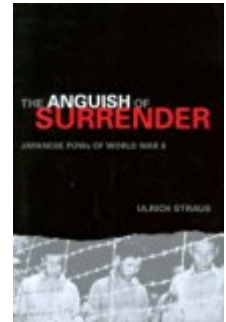


Ulrich Straus. *The Anguish of Surrender: Japanese POWs of World War II.* Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003. Illustrations + maps + notes + bibliography + index \$27.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-295-98336-3.



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In *The Anguish of Surrender*, Ulrich Straus contributes the first monographic history of Japanese prisoners of war in Western Allied custody during World War II.[1] Through the use of U.S. National Archives documents, Japanese memoirs (all but three unavailable in English), correspondence with former POWs, and thirty-five interviews, the author complements works by John Dower, Allison Gilmore, John Lynn, and Arnold Krammer.[2] While touching on the Soviet Union and China, and mentioning the post-VJ Day surrenders, Straus focuses upon the 35,000 Japanese captives taken by the Western Allies between December 8, 1941 and August 15, 1945, 5,000 of whom were held in the continental United States. Straus's account brings nuance to our understanding of the Pacific War, recounting the rare instances of Japanese surrender and documenting the POWs' generally humane treatment in Allied custody. Periodically living in Japan for twenty-one years, the author brings a lifetime of study of Japanese culture and language to this book. He served with the Army Translation and Interpretation Service (ATIS) during World War II, translated German and Japanese documents at the Inter-

national Military Tribunal for the Far East, and held various diplomatic posts in Japan.

The first chapter, "Prisoner Number One," highlights the special plight of Japanese POWs through the case of Sakamaki Kazuo. Deployed on the evening of December 6, 1941 near Pearl Harbor, Sakamaki's midget submarine ran aground. Captured on December 8, Sakamaki faced interrogation and the fear of ostracism in Japan. Being the lone Japanese POW in U.S. captivity for over a year compounded his sense of shame. Emerging as a leader at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, the largest U.S. camp for Japanese POWs, he went on to a distinguished career with Toyota; nonetheless, he encountered unwelcome publicity as Japan's first captive of World War II.

Chapter 2, "Japan's Policy on Prisoners of War," traces Japanese attitudes toward surrender from feudal times until 1941. Despite the absence of retaliation against Japanese repatriates from the Russo-Japanese War, the *Bushido* tradition ultimately prevailed over the POW conventions in the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA). In 1930, the Japanese rejected the 1929 Geneva Convention's rat-

ification because surrender was unthinkable. The Soviet capture of many Japanese during the Battle of Nomanhan in 1939 posed a quandary that led to a new IJA policy, the *Senjinkun* (Field Service Code).

Chapter 3, "Indoctrination into the *Senjinkun*," introduces the concept behind the Field Service Code. Issued on January 7, 1941 by War Minister Tojo Hideki, *Senjinkun* declared that Japanese troops were not permitted to surrender. Stopping short of outlawing surrender, it exerted considerable moral authority. Captured officers were expected to commit suicide, while repatriates would be relocated to portions of Japan's growing empire where they could live out their shame in civilian service. The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) embraced *Senjinkun*, but never formally adopted it. An indication of *Senjinkun*'s overall effectiveness was the tiny number of captives taken before August 15, 1945. Its implicit corollary was that captured Western soldiers counted for nothing, which resulted in an estimated 27,250 Allied deaths.[3] The brutal treatment of Allied POWs further deterred Japanese soldiers from surrender. Bolstering *Senjinkun*'s moral impact was the harsh discipline imposed upon recruits. Starving, feeling betrayed by privileged officers, reading Allied surrender leaflets, and isolated in the jungle or caves, many soldiers chose surrender. By contrast, the navy's downed pilots and ship crews had little choice when rescued by Allied warships.

Chapter 4, "Honorable Death or Shameful Life," reviews fifteen surrender cases, all captured by U.S. or Filipino forces. Eleven of the fifteen were well educated or embraced Western values or ideologies, such as Christianity or Marxism. The assertion that they were "representative" is problematic, because the criteria are not explained and most of the POWs were Westernized (p. 57). The fact that even the Westernized POWs hesitated to surrender or contemplated suicide

demonstrates how deeply *Senjinkun* imbued the Japanese military.

Calculating that Japanese was too difficult for Caucasians to master and that racial prejudice excluded the Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) from U.S. service, the IJA took few precautions to secure sensitive documents and radio messages. The title of Chapter 5, "America's Secret Weapons: The Army and Navy Japanese Language Schools," is particularly apt. Although many of their Issei (first-generation) parents were interned, the Nisei slowly overcame prejudice against their military deployment. The ATIS enlisted Nisei interpreters after taking into account the 442nd Regimental Combat Team's outstanding performance in Italy, but the U.S. Navy exclusively recruited Caucasians. The Nisei serving with the U.S. Marine Corps were members of ATIS. The Nisei's ability to interpret Japanese culture, such as the correlation of *gyukosai* (suicide) attacks with Japanese religious holidays, saved many American lives. Although not the first study to review the Nisei's role in the Pacific War, Straus's is the most comprehensive to date.[4]

Chapter 6, "The Interrogations," evaluates the interrogations of Japanese POWs. The logic of *Senjinkun* dictated that the IJA did not train soldiers in post-surrender behavior. The Japanese did not know about Geneva Convention rights or the obligation to disclose only name, rank, and service number. The interrogations, which began in the field but continued in rear-area camps and at special U.S. centers, did not typically proceed from torture, but kindness. The offer of a cigarette, a warm meal, medical treatment, or fresh clothing caught the POWs off guard. The need to reciprocate these gifts and "falling into the trap of believing that the Americans knew a great deal more than they actually did" induced many captives to tell what they knew (p. 144).

Chapter 7, "A Few Very Special POWs," examines five extraordinary POWs. The most important case concerns Vice Adm. Fukudome Shigeru, the

only Japanese captive involved in a prisoner exchange with Allied forces. Held by Lt. Col. John Cushing's Filipino forces, Fukudone was captured after his plane crashed, but exchanged when the IJA surrounded the guerrillas. The special treatment granted this flag officer revealed the selective application of *Senjinkun*.

Chapter 8, "Uprisings in the Stockades," analyzes the small number of Japanese POW revolts. The POWs were divided between Allied collaborators, *Senjinkun* hard-liners, and a passive majority. A few of the POWs turned violent at the urging of hard-liners or when camp staff (sometimes unwittingly) insulted them. Alongside the political factions were service rivalries, in which physically exhausted IJA captives avoided confrontation while better-conditioned IJN personnel sometimes started trouble. At Camp Featherston, New Zealand, the admission of a warship's survivors transformed the camp's internal dynamic, initiating a revolt that produced forty-eight POW deaths. During the conspiratorial discussions prior to the uprisings, a conflict emerged between the prisoners' *tatema* (what society expected them to say) and *honne* (personal feelings). The hard-liners sometimes took over because the moderates, who wished to sit out captivity, paid lip service to the *tatema* without voicing their misgivings. The moderates suffered most in these revolts, while the instigators sometimes emerged unscathed.

Chapter 9, "Everyday Life in the Stockades," reviews Japanese POW detention. Before VJ-Day, the U.S. military refrained from employing Japanese outside the wire, in order to avoid incidents with U.S. civilians. This practice contrasted with the Italian and especially German POWs, who were extensively deployed in agriculture, land management, and, after VE-Day, war production. The shock of Japan's surrender took time to absorb and the captives' treatment perceptibly worsened after VJ-Day, as they were deployed on external work assignments. From Straus's account, it is evident that the U.S. Provost Marshal's

Office did not attempt to re-educate the small number of Japanese prisoners in the continental United States, as was the case for German POWs. Generous treatment nevertheless forced some captives to rethink their political views, an informal but effective form of re-education.[5]

Chapter 10, "Returning Home Alive," brings the captives' ordeal full circle. Expecting ostracism, most experienced joyous reunions with families and neighbors. Despite the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross furnished the available names of POWs to Tokyo, the Imperial War and Navy ministries issued death notices, modestly pensioned the families, and listed the names at the Yakusuni shrine for war dead. The families received small boxes purporting to contain loved ones' remains, some of which were empty. Called "ghosts," the repatriates had to restore their names on the family rolls before they could re-enter society (p. 237). Discovering that Japan had become a collective POW camp, they realized that the shame of surrender applied to all and therefore to none.

Chapter 11, "Reflections on Japan's Wartime No-Surrender Policy," concludes that the policy of *Senjinkun* amounted to a catastrophic waste of Japanese and Allied lives and a colossal military blunder. Offsetting the numerous Allied deaths caused by Japan's suicidal policies was the intelligence gleaned from POW interrogations (p. 251).

Straus's seminal contribution comprehensively explores the Japanese POW experience and fills a substantial gap in POW historiography. Although the treatment of German and Italian POWs in Allied custody is mentioned *en passant*, Straus does not explicitly compare Allied policy toward these nationalities or their experiences in captivity with the Japanese. His book nevertheless lays the groundwork for a comprehensive evaluation of Axis POWs in U.S. hands. Hopefully, scholars with the requisite language skills will produce similar studies about Japanese POWs in Soviet and Chinese custody.

Notes

[1.] Review title quote from John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

[2.] John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Alison B. Gilmore, *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets: Psychological Warfare against the Japanese Army in the Southwest Pacific* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture: From Ancient Greece to Modern America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003); and Arnold Krammer, "Japanese Prisoners of War in America," *Pacific Historical Review* 52, no. 1 (February 1983): 67-91.

[3.] For the estimate of Allied POW deaths, see Van Waterford, pseud. [Willem F. Wanrooy], *Prisoners of the Japanese: Statistical History, Personal Narratives, and Memorials Concerning POWs in Camps and on Hellships, Civilian Internees, Asian Slave Laborers, and Others Captured in the Pacific Theater* (Jefferson and London: McFarland and Co., Pub., 1994), p. 144. Waterford's estimate includes U.S., British, Australian, Indian, and Dutch prisoners. On the treatment of Allied POWs in Japanese hands more generally, see Gavan Daws, *Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of World War II in the Pacific* (New York: William Morrow, 1994).

[4.] The first book to reveal the Nisei's role as translators and interpreters was Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Detroit, MI: Petti-grew Enterprises, 1979).

[5.] On German POW labor in the United States, see Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Chelsea, MI: Scarborough House Publishers, 1979); and G. H. Davis, "Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 623-634. On the German POW re-education program in the United States, see Ron Robin, *The Barbed-Wire*

College: Reeducating German POWs in the United States during World War II (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). Robin concludes that the U.S. re-education program was largely a failure.

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