



Martin Sugarman. *Under the Heel of Bushido: Last Voices of Jewish POWs of the Japanese in the Second World War.* London: Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, 2014. xxiv + 666 pp. \$50.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-85303-877-1.

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During the Second World War, the life of an Allied prisoner of war (POW) was uncertain and often unforgiving. Some recollections and memoirs focus on unending boredom, while others remember backbreaking labor and endless hunger. Disease ravaged many healthy young men in Southeast Asia, while in Eastern Europe Soviet prisoners often had no chance of survival once in the hands of their captors. Yet, while general conclusions about the difficulty facing POWs can ring true spatially across theaters or temporally across the conflict, the experiences of individuals and groups who underwent such hardships often create distinctive perspectives and memories of the Second World War. *Under the Heel of Bushido: Last Voices of the Jewish POWs of the Japanese in the Second World War* adds the narratives of an often-underrepresented group to this general understanding by focusing on Jewish experiences under the Japanese, a portion of the Jewish community whose wartime suffering has long been overshadowed by the terror that occurred across Europe.

Western Allied servicemen unfortunate enough to be captured by the forces of the Japanese Empire, whose notorious treatment of POWs has been well documented, faced incredible hardship. While the conditions facing these particular

POWs, and often the civilians who ended up in similar circumstances, are the subject of many scholarly and popular histories, the way such experiences resonated within certain communities is still worthy of exploration. Through the compilation of dozens of memoirs, interviews, and biographical works, Martin Sugarman's efforts have resulted in a thorough examination of the specific experiences and tribulations of a substantial number of Jewish POWs who found themselves at the mercy of an enemy that barely understood their religion or culture.

In the introduction to *Under the Heel of Bushido*, Sugarman explains that his primary objective is to give a voice to the Jewish community's experience at the hands of the Japanese Empire, and to solidify the fact that the Jewish presence among the Japanese camps was substantial enough to warrant exploration and recognition. Sugarman points out that the Jewish presence among the Japanese prison camps has been vastly underestimated by other publications, and specifically points to his displeasure at encountering a dismissive mention in an otherwise excellent popular work, Brian McArthur's *Surviving the Sword: Prisoners of the Japanese in the Far East, 1942-45* (2005). Sugarman makes it clear throughout his work that this was not the case. In fact, many no-

table and interesting stories have been hidden or only somewhat explored by the heretofore apparent lack of interest in the Jewish experience in the East. Notably, the ingenuity of the POWs comes out in Captain Dr. David Arkush's testimony where it is explained that he and his comrades created a working dental chair so David could tend to the prisoners. Other stories like that of Canadian doctor and amputation specialist Jacob Markovitch highlight the terrible suffering faced by prisoners while also demonstrating that positive spirits and humor could keep men alive. Many more stories illustrate the specific role prisoners' Jewishness played in their own survival, whether it be by organizing religious services or attempting to create tiny communities within the larger camps. As a work that sets out to demonstrate that these experiences amount to a unique and relevant addition to POW literature, *Under the Heel of Bushido* succeeds.

Aside from this emphasis and the unfortunately all too common stories of disease, overwork, and racial mistreatment, interesting trends appear. Sugarman notes that the Japanese rarely treated Jewish prisoners differently because they were Jewish; rather, they lumped Jewish POWs in with the remaining prisoners as imperialists and racial enemies. Occasionally stories pointed to specific Jewish discrimination, but it was not the dominant reaction. Many stories reinforce the notion that East Asia received only a filtered and simplistic version of Jewish stereotypes that led to a unique notion of what Judaism represented. Others highlight the interservice or national rivalries that sprung up within the camps, while still others shed light on the different treatment received at the hands of different captors, with many pointing out that more brutal beatings came from Korean guards, themselves facing difficult social constraints and expectations.

This work will be best enjoyed by scholars of Jewish history or members of the wider Jewish community who now have before them the op-

portunity to better understand what Jewish individuals experienced at the hands of the Japanese. In the classroom, I believe *Under the Heel of Bushido* can serve well in undergraduate courses in which the instructor wishes to discuss issues of memory, distortion, and experiential history. This work does not specifically address these issues, but by presenting such a wide array of narrative styles and language, collected from a variety of sources, *Under the Heel of Bushido* can serve to highlight the difficult task of assessing truth through oral accounts and memoirs. William Allister's beautifully written account, for example, can serve as an excellent case study for students to examine the issues surrounding narrative style and accuracy in memoirs. Allister's recollection of his encounter with a Japanese woman after years of imprisonment and the recurrent threat of sexual violence at the hands of captors is ambiguous enough to stimulate a great deal of discussion, especially when juxtaposed with some of the more matter-of-fact recollections that can be found throughout the rest of the work. While general accounts of POWs and civilian struggles may be more useful for instructors looking for an overview, these collections offer an important personal touch that can connect students with an individual's own experiences and the struggles that come with presenting those experiences to the world. As an exploration of primary source construction and utility, this collection offers ample opportunity for use in the classroom.

Under the Heel of Bushido fulfills its intended aim and demonstrates that the experience of Jewish POWs in the East deserves to be known, and listening to their voices is one of the best ways to learn about their experiences. Sugarman's work also shows that the Jewish experience during the Second World War was more diverse than the horror of the Holocaust in Europe, and the stories of these POWs highlight the strength, determination, and agency displayed by Jewish soldiers in a distant theater. As an academic work, it provides interesting opportunities for teaching at the un-

dergraduate level. Outside of the classroom, it provides a community with one more chapter in their collective story, and allows anyone interested to better understand an underrepresented set of experiences from the Second World War.

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