

A “Gruesome Business”: Collecting and Repatriating Pacific Theater War Trophies

by

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Abstract

While serving in the Pacific Theater of World War II, American servicemen collected a variety of souvenirs. Some men collected skulls and bones. Other men collected flags, photographs, binoculars, or other personal property from the bodies of dead or wounded Japanese soldiers. These American men, influenced by the racist propaganda put forth by various agencies in the United States, treated the Japanese as if they were animals or sub-human creatures. The collecting practices of the American men serving in the Pacific were legally and ethically questionable. Once the servicemen brought these items back to the United States, they displayed them at home, tucked them away in boxes, and donated them to museums. Around the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, some veterans decided to repatriate their souvenirs to Japan. Returning souvenirs to their country of origin or to the surviving family of the slain Japanese soldier, often provides a cathartic experience for the American veteran. Museums, too, have recently become active in the process of repatriating items of cultural sensitivity. This thesis considers motivations for wartime collecting, the legal and ethical ramifications of souvenir hunting, museum collection policies and display tactics, and the reconciliation and healing that comes from repatriation.

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Introduction

On June 13, 1944, *New York Mirror* political commentator Drew Pearson wrote a column about a disturbing gift exchange. Congressman Francis Walter of Pennsylvania presented President Franklin Roosevelt with a carved letter-opener.¹ Such a gift seems innocuous. However, the letter-opener had been carved from the arm bone of a Japanese soldier. Once word of the gift became public, a White House spokesman told the press that a “well-wisher” sent the president the gift. President Roosevelt requested that the gift be returned with an appeal to have the bone buried.²

This thesis considers motivations for wartime collecting, the legal and ethical ramifications of souvenir hunting, museum collection ethics, and the reconciliation and healing that comes from repatriation. Authors have documented the looting of enemy bodies for souvenirs in the Pacific Theater of World War II by American military men rather extensively. Drawing on photographs, letters, witness accounts, and memoirs, James Dower, Niall Ferguson, James Weingartner and Simon Harrison have provided researchers with the undeniable truth that American servicemen routinely dishonored the enemy war dead by stripping them of their personal property and even their bones. These authors have provided readers with a clear picture of the souvenir hunting tactics in the Pacific.³ Each writer used a vast array of primary source

¹ James Weingartner, “Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941-1945,” *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1992): 53-67.

² “Roosevelt Rejects Gift Made of Japanese Bone,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1944, 30.

³ Simon Harrison, “Skull Trophies of the Pacific War” in *Dark Trophies: Hunting and the Enemy Body in Modern War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012): 129-140; see also “Transgressive Objects of Remembrance,” 141-54;³ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Niall Ferguson, *The War of the Worlds: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); James Weingartner, “Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941-1945,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1992): 53-67.

material to demonstrate that the practice of trophy-taking occurred often and involved sometimes horrifying acts. Boiling skulls to remove the flesh and brutally bashing out teeth to harvest the gold in them are mentioned multiple times throughout a plethora of works. On the less violent side, men searched dead bodies for flags, photographs, diaries, swords, and anything else that could be considered a trophy.

Three of the authors mentioned above, Dower, Weingartner, and Harrison provide the historical context for the American detestation of the Japanese people. The surprise attack by the Japanese military at Pearl Harbor, vast cultural differences, and dissimilarities in physical appearance all contributed to the racist American view of the foe. Chapter One draws upon their works and the propaganda put forth by American corporations, organizations, and the military to demonstrate that Americans associated the Japanese with vermin and subhuman monsters. The racist and animalistic view towards the Japanese people provides context for the madness of collecting in the war in the Pacific.

Chapter One then discusses the theories of collecting to gain a better understanding as to why men took certain things as souvenirs. A look at collecting in past wars showed that men took the personal property of the dead for five main reasons. One reason was as extra compensation for their service. Some American servicemen in the Pacific took gold teeth from the Japanese war dead to sell once back in the United States.⁴ Other reasons for the rampant souvenir hunting include joining in with the group, using the items as proof of having been in the war, to engage in a treasure hunt of sorts, and to cope with the death which surrounded the men.

The legality of souvenir hunting during wartime is a neglected topic in historical literature. While many authors have included a study of racism and trophy collecting in the

⁴ Eugene Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 117.

Pacific, few discussed the legal issues surrounding the practice. One author, Clifton Bryant, wrote about crimes in the United States military across multiple wars.⁵ In reference to the looting in the Pacific Islands, Bryant argued that the military command simply discouraged souvenir hunting because of the undue danger the act routinely brought about for the men. He avoided calling the practice a war crime. Chapter Two explores the resources which imply that the trophy collecting did in fact constitute a war crime. The evidence to support this claim came from multiple sources including The Hague Convention of 1907, The Geneva Convention of 1906, and the War Department's Rules of Land Warfare. These sources contain articles outlawing the desecration of bodies, maltreatment of the wounded and imprisoned, and the theft of personal property. The language in these documents, as well as orders from military commanders to stop souvenir hunting, provide the evidence needed to conclude that trophy collecting in the Pacific was illegal by the standards of the United States military.

Chapter Two further explores legality in reference to the collecting practices of American museums. Many museums received war souvenirs after the end of the war. Those artifacts are kept in storage or put on display to tell the story of World War II. However, museum's ethical guidelines dictate that stolen property should not be accessioned into collections.⁶ The nature of the objects stolen from the Japanese in the Pacific burdens museums with an ethical dilemma. This dilemma extends to the narrative which museums create with war souvenirs. The message of American heroics and military success ignores the original intent of the objects on display.

One solution to the ethical and legal issue of taking and keeping war souvenirs is to repatriate them to Japan. Chapter Three discusses the repatriation of trophies of war by

⁵ Clifton Bryant, *Khaki-Collar Crime: Deviant Behavior in the Military* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

⁶ "Developing a Collections Management Policy." American Alliance of Museums (2012). <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/continuum/developing-a-cmp-final.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

American veterans and how museums can learn from the process. A number of stories about the repatriation of stolen property and bones emerged in the late twentieth century. This research draws upon the multitude of stories of American veterans, their family members, and even people unassociated with the objects returning war trophies to the surviving family members of the deceased Japanese soldiers. The accounts, mostly documented in newspapers, tell not only about the process of repatriation, but also of the emotional healing that occurs between the American and the Japanese families. Many of the American veterans from this case study felt relieved to have the objects gone from their homes. The process provided them with closure on a horrific chapter of their lives.

While federally funded museums across the country comply with government mandated repatriation in respect to Native American goods, no movement has been made to repatriate stolen artifacts to peoples outside of the country.⁷ The return of items through the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act has shown that this is possible for museums as well. Federally funded museums created lists of their Native American collections and made them available to tribes. Tribal officials then get the opportunity to claim items from the lists for their people under sacred ritual piece or cultural patrimony. A similar process could aid museums in regards to coordinating the repatriation of war trophies in their collections. The repatriation of war souvenirs by American veterans and their family indicates that reconciliation can happen many years after the battle is over. American museums can step outside of the victorious narrative and provide some closure between the United States and Japan.

⁷ Timothy McKeown, *In the Smaller Scope of Conscience: The Struggle for National Repatriation Legislation, 1986-1990* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012), 139-72.

Chapter One

Curious Collecting: Souvenir Hunters in the Pacific Theater

Following a battle on the island of Peleliu, Eugene Sledge watched his fellow Marines strip the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers for souvenirs. The men checked all pockets, helmets, and any other hiding place for flags, knives, and anything that might be of value. Many Marines took gold capped teeth from the mouths of the dead. As Sledge mentioned, the entire process became standard procedure following any battle in the Pacific.¹ No thought process necessary; souvenir hunting became as instinctual as killing the enemy. This chapter will explore the diaries of Pacific Theater veterans for their stories of collecting and provide context for their maltreatment of Japanese war dead. To take this analysis further, this paper will then apply collection theory in the attempt to determine motives behind war time souvenir hunting.

American servicemen in the Pacific Theater collected for reasons other than just to have a souvenir to bring home and show off to their friends. Racial propaganda deeply influenced the Americans' attitudes toward the Japanese aggressors. Anthropologist Simon Harrison argued that the United States military's use of racially driven enlistment tactics set the stage for a grotesque war in the Pacific.² The military's use of posters and pamphlets labeling the Japanese soldier as vermin meant to be exterminated allowed Americans to see them as subhuman. In contrast, the European foe in Germany bore a similar resemblance to the typical American. The German's appearance, way of life, religion, and language made them more similar to Americans and therefore not subject to such overt racism.

¹ Eugene Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 118-20.

² Simon Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War" in *Dark Trophies: Hunting and the Enemy Body in Modern War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012): 129-140; see also "Transgressive Objects of Remembrance," 141-54.

Historian John Dower explored racism and maltreatment in the Pacific Theater in *War Without Mercy*. Dower illuminated the mutual hatred between American and Japanese troops. He described in brutal detail the horrifying actions by both sides of the battle. Japanese troops mutilated dead American's bodies for their fellow servicemen to find. Americans removed gold teeth from men who were sometimes still alive. Dower wrote about the ways in which Americans reduced the Japanese to nothing more than mere vermin to be stomped out with a mighty boot. Dower wrote, "A characteristic feature of this level of anti-Japanese sentiment was the resort to nonhuman or subhuman representation, in which the Japanese were perceived as animals..." He provided the reader with much information about the place of race in the war in the Pacific.³

Harrison's argument about American motivations for mistreating Japanese belligerents is reinforced by the memoirs and diaries of United States veterans of the Pacific Theater such as Eugene Sledge, Robert Leckie, Sid Phillips, and even Richard Tregaskis, who either recognized the racial factor or exhibited the desired effects of the propaganda in their writings.⁴ The diaries of veterans revealed a deep-seeded hatred of their Japanese counterparts. The American's opinion of the Japanese soldier made him vulnerable to theft and mutilation, even before death. If racism is the reason soldiers mistreated Japanese war dead, what reason did they have for taking their personal property as souvenirs?

³ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). Also see Niall Ferguson, *The War of the Worlds: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 81

⁴ Sledge; Sid Phillips, *You'll Be Sor-ree!* (Denver, CO: Valor Studios, 2010); Robert Leckie, *Helmet for My Pillow* (New York: Bantam Books, 1957); Richard Tregaskis, *Guadalcanal Diary* (New York: Random House, 1943); Sy Kahn, *Between Tedium and Terror* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); George Lince, *Too Young the Heroes* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997); Charles Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A Lindbergh* (New York: Harcourt, 1970).

Collection theory can help one to understand the reasoning behind souvenir hunting in the Pacific Theater. In essence, collection theory is the attempt to understand why and how people select, gather, keep, and give value to certain objects.⁵ French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard took a Freudian approach to collecting theory in his essay “The System of Collecting.” Baudrillard argued that collecting is a passion of loved objects.⁶ Another philosopher and theorist, Walter Benjamin, wrote his essay, “Unpacking My Library,” from his perspective as an avid book collector. He stressed the importance of travel in aiding his search for rare or unique items. The author searched antique shops in every foreign land he traveled to find the perfect books to add to his collection.⁷ Each city represented a grand quest to find the missing link of the collection. Each book attained represented a life experience of the collector. English Professor Deborah Lutz agreed with Benjamin when she argued that people collected soldier’s bones, bullet fragments, and clothing after battles in the Victorian period as a way to claim the experience. Possessing something from the battlefield made a person feel as if they had taken part in the fight themselves.⁸ Another theorist, Werner Muensterberger, wrote about collecting from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. He asserted that “the emotional involvement in the pursuit of objects, their excitement or distress in finding or losing them...” are a part of the obsession with collecting.⁹

⁵ Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting,” in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 7.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library: A Talk About Collecting,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 63.

⁸ Deborah Lutz, “The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, (2011): 129.

⁹ Muensterberger, 3.

The collecting practices of the American servicemen in the Pacific Islands differed from man to man. While some men felt that taking body parts was too macabre, most had no issues with taking personal property. The American collectors in the Pacific can be broken into five categories. Men collected for economic purposes, to engage in a grand quest, to gather proof of their wartime experience, to join in with the hunting group, and others collected as a way to cope with death.¹⁰

Many of the men who collected for economic purposes took the gold capped teeth of their foe. Marine Robert Leckie had a friend who received the telling nickname of “Souvenirs.” The men remembered Souvenirs as the Marine who always carried pliers in his back pocket and a pouch around his neck. He avidly collected Japanese gold capped teeth. He willingly went out on patrols just so that he could scour the area for dead soldiers with gold teeth still intact. Leckie and his comrades took turns estimating how many gold teeth Souvenirs had collected since they arrived on the island. They guessed around seventy-five, but Souvenirs never revealed the actual number. He had good reason to keep the amount a secret. The gold caps fetched money in the United States. Even with seventy-five teeth, Souvenirs could receive around \$2,000. Keeping the teeth around his neck and never sharing how many he had helped Souvenirs hang on to his expensive prizes.¹¹

After soldiers completed the collecting process, a trading practice ensued. The men displayed their trophies and bartered them for other desirable ones. Sledge related this practice to the barbarians of past who hated their enemies with so much force that they would often strip

¹⁰ For works on group mentality see: C. Fred Alford, *Group Psychology and Political Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Mark Blumberg, *Basic Instinct: The Genesis of Behavior* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2005); Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916; repr., New York: Cosimo, 2005).

¹¹ Leckie, 117.

them naked or scalp them for trophies. He felt that he and his fellow soldiers were not fighting a modern or civilized war, but one filled with mutual hatred so deep that even the dead were disrespected. Sledge found the entire process to be “brutal” and “ghastly.”¹²

Another type of collector took part in the hunt for souvenirs as if it were a grand quest of sorts. The dangerous quest of for a souvenir gave the object acquired a special value and backstory. The collector’s theory put forth by German philosopher Walter Benjamin may shed light on the risky collecting practices of soldiers in the Pacific Islands. Benjamin suggested that it is the circumstances under which the person gained an object that gives it value and importance. Due to the experiences linked to the object, the value cannot be simply based on the object itself, but also on the measures taken to procure it. The experience of acquiring an object, especially if it is a rare experience, will forever be interwoven with the object’s original context for the collector. In this way, a collector is able to attribute meaning and value to an object.¹³

During slow periods in battle, the men from the rear made their way to the front line to hunt for souvenirs. Eugene Sledge and others on the front line resented these men because they had cleaner, better clothes and they always looked freshly shaven. Their look starkly contrasted that of the men on the front lines. They constantly looked dirty, unshaven, and their clothes were filthy and ragged. At one point, two of the men from the rear marched right past Sledge on the front line on a hunt for trophies. They turned to him and asked where the front line was. Sledge replied that they had just passed it. The men, realizing their dangerous error, quickly retreated to

¹² Sledge, 120.

¹³ Benjamin, 63.

the rear and never returned.¹⁴ The rear forces risked being on the front line in order to retrieve some piece of the battle that they did not get to experience.

Robert Leckie witnessed and participated in souvenir hunting. Men often undertook great risk to obtain their prize. During his time on Guadalcanal, Leckie found himself in a particularly dangerous situation while attempting to score some loot. Following a battle on the Tenaru River, he thought he spotted an officer's sabre attached to a dead Japanese body. Leckie dumped his gear and swam across the river. To his disappointment, Leckie failed to locate a sabre amongst the pile of fly-infested and stinking dead bodies. He settled for a bayonet and pair of field glasses before recrossing the river.¹⁵ Less than an hour later, crocodiles invaded the river to fill their bellies on the rotting Japanese flesh. Leckie considered himself fortunate to have exited the river before they arrived.¹⁶

Similarly, Sy Kahn, a soldier in the Army, recounted a deadly souvenir hunt on Biak Island. Four soldiers left the relative safety of the rear to search for trophies at the front line. A group of Japanese soldiers ambushed them. Of the four, one took a bullet and another narrowly escaped the explosion of a grenade. All survived the hunt, but they did not return with any booty. As a result of their pillage patrol, the commanding officer banned all souvenir hunting. Kahn agreed with the officer. He felt that the Japanese dug in to Biak posed enough threat; the men did not need to seek out more trouble.¹⁷

Although American soldiers did not need to search for more danger than already surrounded them, they often did. George Lince, a Marine, took part in a trophy hunt with his

¹⁴ Sledge, 133-4.

¹⁵ Leckie, 86.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁷ Kahn, 148-9.

friends. They saw a Japanese fighter plane crash on Okinawa. In what Lince describes as “teenage curiosity,” the Marines gathered their weapons and set out to locate the plane.¹⁸ When they arrived at the crash site, the men’s enthusiasm soon deflated into dissatisfaction. The Marines knew that Japanese pilots carried a “prized pistol, a personal flag, and a Samurai sword.”¹⁹ However, six feet of dirt covered the pilot and his cockpit. Unwilling to return to their post empty handed, the men cut strips from the plane’s wings for souvenirs. At the end of Lince’s story, he mentioned that the men traveled two miles into Japanese held territory on this expedition.²⁰

Navy veteran Dale Cochrane witnessed another dangerous souvenir hunt on Okinawa. A Japanese fighter plane crashed near Cochrane’s worksite. The Navy carpenters took the opportunity to look for souvenirs at the crash site. When they arrived in the crater created by the plane and began to search the wreckage, the men found an unexploded 500 pound bomb. Cochrane’s friends quickly evacuated the hole and returned with no souvenirs. Cochrane noted that all of them could have lost their lives on such a “foolish” hunt had the bomb detonated. He credited Providence for keeping the men out of harm’s way on that occasion. Again, some men put themselves in hazardous conditions just for a trophy only to come out empty-handed.²¹

A third type of collector sought to gain proof of his war experience through souvenirs. Richard Tregaskis served as a war correspondent for the International News Service. His voluntary assignment placed him at the front of one of the first bloody battles of the Pacific, on Guadalcanal. He first witnessed the methods of souvenir hunting with the advance units of

¹⁸ Lince, 96.

¹⁹ Ibid., 96.

²⁰ Ibid., 96.

²¹ Dale Cochrane, interview by author over phone, March 20, 2015.

sailors. The Navy men gathered Japanese signs to take home.²² Later while on a patrol, Tregaskis and the squad he accompanied came across a group of Japanese soldiers who had just been killed. The group searched each dead man's pack. Tregaskis described the items found, but omitted whether anything was taken as a souvenir.²³ Even seemingly insignificant items, like signs, serve as proof of having been there.

The group mentality that accompanied souvenir hunts can be seen in the dangerous hunt described by Dale Cochrane. Another example is found in the diary of Eugene Sledge. Sledge witnessed his fellow Marines routinely strip bodies after battles for souvenirs. Sledge labeled the collecting practice as a "gruesome business."²⁴ He recalled a particular incident in which a Marine drug a wounded Japanese soldier across a field and then removed his teeth. The Marine stuck a knife into the wounded's mouth and gashed his face. The entire time the Japanese man struggled, moaned, and gurgled blood from his brutally slashed mouth. Sledge yelled for the soldier to put the wounded man out of his misery. In return, he received a "cussing out."²⁵ In another situation on Peleliu, Eugene's friend showed him his prized possession, a Japanese hand. The Marine questioned how many Marines on which the hand had pulled the trigger. After much pleading from Sledge and others, the Marine threw the hand upon the rocks of the beach.²⁶

Sledge denied taking part in the collecting of body parts for trophies. He did, however, admit to taking personal property. While he begged the Marine mentioned previously to put the wounded Japanese soldier out of his misery, Sledge stripped a dead man of his bayonet and

²² Tregaskis, 46.

²³ Ibid., 131.

²⁴ Sledge, 118.

²⁵ Ibid., 120.

²⁶ Ibid., 152-3.

scabbard.²⁷ Even Sledge, an educated young man, collected souvenirs to serve as reminders of his experiences in the war.

The fifth type of collector took the bones of the dead Japanese. Historian Joanna Bourke argued that by collecting the bones, ears, and teeth of enemy war dead, American servicemen connected death with the “other.”²⁸ Death in war is universal. It does not discriminate from one person to the other. By collecting items from the dead, Americans coped with the fact that death surrounded them in the Pacific. Their experience with death made the Japanese foe relatable to the American. The experience of death linked the Japanese and Americans.

Sy Kahn and his fellow, Norm, found a lower leg bone and two ribs while they walked down a small trail towards their billet. Each man took a rib for a souvenir. A few steps later, Kahn found a skull with teeth still intact. He supposedly determined it to be that of a Japanese soldier because of the bone structure. After washing the skull in the ocean, Kahn dried it in the sun. He decided that it would make an excellent candle holder due to the large, jagged edged hole in the upper back portion of the skull. As a finishing touch, Kahn and his friends named the skull “Charlie.” Sy Kahn reflected upon the skull and its past later that day. He wondered who once occupied the broken body they had stumbled upon. Sy questioned as to whether the dead man was good or horrendous, educated or ignorant, married with family or a single soldier dedicated to the fight. He found no answers in the skull, only a makeshift candle holder.²⁹

Another man in the Pacific, Charles Lindbergh, kept a diary of his travels and experiences throughout the war. Lindbergh, who achieved world-wide fame for his non-stop

²⁷ Ibid., 120.

²⁸ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 29.

²⁹ Kahn, 82.

flight from New York to Paris in 1927, served as a civilian consultant during World War II. He spent a lot of time in the Pacific. Unlike Tregaskis, who only wrote about men taking Japanese signs, Lindbergh documented the more shocking forms of trophy hunting amongst American servicemen. In August 1944, while waiting for weather to clear for flight, Lindbergh noticed something peculiar in the alert tent. Atop the bulletin board sat a cleaned Japanese skull. He made no other comments about the skull in his diary. The fact that a human skull was in the tent seemed so normal in his writing.³⁰ Later that month, Lindbergh recorded in his diary that men from the Fighter Control patrolled voluntarily and brought back Japanese bones to fashion into pen holders, paper knives, and other things.³¹ Fighting from the air offered little opportunity to collect trophies. If the men wanted souvenirs, they had to go out on their own to retrieve them.

The next month, September 1944, Lindbergh documented a conversation with an officer in the Marines. The officer told him of Marines examining the piles of dead Japanese soldiers for pocket contents and gold teeth. He distinctly remembered seeing bodies with missing ears, noses, and heads. The officer told Lindbergh, “Our boys cut them off to show their friends in fun, or to dry and take back to the States when they go.”³² Another Marine took a Japanese head. He attempted to bury it in an ant hill in the hopes that the insects would clean the meat off of the skull. In the end, the odor became so foul that the officers took the skull away from him.³³ Nothing about that unusual situation seemed odd to the officer. Cutting of body parts of dead foes was all in good fun. As Lindbergh noted, “It is the same story everywhere I go.”³⁴

³⁰ Lindbergh, 897.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 906.

³² *Ibid.*, 919.

³³ *Ibid.*, 919.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 919.

Psychoanalyst Werner Muensterberger argued that collecting fills a void in a person's life and can help them cope with trauma. During uncertain or traumatic times in life, people project their affection onto objects for comfort. Collectors often name their objects and come to view them as companions. Sy Kahn's friends named their skull "Charlie." Muensterberger asserted that animism, or the act of giving an object a name or personality, is a coping mechanism for anxiety and fear.³⁵ The fear and trauma associated with war experiences in the Pacific could explain part of the collecting process of American servicemen.

The experience of war is particularly unique. There is a larger narrative that historians see as they look back upon the war as a whole. However, every man experienced something different in wartime than the man next to him. A soldier's thoughts and perspective always differ from his fellow men, even if just minutely. To further separate veterans, every war is different. Technological advances and progressive diplomatic measures ensure that every war, every battle is different than the one before or after. The objects collected in the Pacific Theater and the measures taken to obtain them are each unique. Each flag, photograph, and even skull collected on the islands differed as much as the journey the soldier took to acquire them. Soldiers returned home with their souvenirs that carried the memories, good or bad, of their time spent in the Pacific. For a soldier who returned to the United States with a Rising Sun flag, the object meant more than just a symbol of Japanese culture. The story of how he obtained the flag became a part of that item's intrinsic and symbolic value. He will forever remember the steps he took to acquire it, how many pockets he searched or where in the Pacific he was when he found the flag. The story and the object coalesce.

³⁵ Muensterberger, 9-10.

The racial propaganda employed by various companies, news and entertainment media, and the American government played a significant role in influencing the rampant collecting of personal property and body parts in the Pacific Theater of World War II. American servicemen saw the Japanese as subhuman creatures. Conversely, as argued by Dower, men fighting in the European and African Theaters considered the Germans and Italians as men with whom they shared a few commonalities.

Americans in the European Theater felt that they fought a familiar foe. The Germans and Italians shared a complexion similar to that of Americans. One Marine general noted that “I didn’t always have that feeling in Europe about some poor German family man but with a Jap it was like killing a rattlesnake.”³⁶ Another general, Holland Smith, told a war correspondent that “In the last war, I looked at dead Germans and I thought about their wives and children, these [Japanese] bastards, that doesn’t even occur.”³⁷ That Americans in battle sometimes considered the Germans and Italians humans, like themselves, kept them from mutilating the bodies of their dead foes for souvenirs, although it was not always the case.³⁸

The Pacific Theater differed from the European because Americans saw the Japanese as inhuman. Historian Paul Fussell claimed that the Americans hated the Japanese the most among the Axis powers because they attacked Pearl Harbor. “Only they had the effrontery to attack the United States directly, sinking ships, killing sailors, and embarrassing American pretenses to

³⁶ Lemuel C. Shepherd, oral history interview, U.S. Marine Corps Historical Center, 242.

³⁷ Norman Cooper, *Fighting General: The Biography of Gen. Holland M. “Howlin’ Mad” Smith* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corp Association Bookstore, 1984), 240.

³⁸ For literature on rape and looting in the European Theater see: Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); William Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

alertness and combat adequacy.”³⁹ The shocking attack in Hawaii left Americans with an especially bitter hatred towards the Japanese.

Following the devastation in Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in February 1942. The order allowed the military to confine Japanese-Americans to camps. The internment of over 100,000 people officially served to protect the country from espionage and sabotage.⁴⁰ However, the order effectively created systemic racism and discrimination that targeted Japanese-Americans. This confinement set an example for all Americans that all people of Japanese ancestry, even those who were American citizens, should be mistrusted. The United States government established a standard for the treatment of Japanese not just on American soil, but in the Pacific as well.⁴¹

When American servicemen left for the Pacific Theater to fight the Japanese, they took their hatred with them. Heinous actions by Japanese soldiers solidified the Americans’ abhorrence towards them. The Japanese forces in the Pacific systematically fired upon those carrying the wounded out of the battle zone. They tortured captured Americans and defiled the bodies of those they found dead. Eugene Sledge recalled finding a group of dead American Marines. The Japanese severed one man’s penis and placed it into the dead man’s mouth. Another Marine had his head and hands removed from his body and laid upon his chest.⁴² Such

³⁹ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 116.

⁴⁰ Executive Order 9066, February 19, 1942. Cited in Dower, 79.

⁴¹ For a look at the internment of Japanese-Americans and discrimination towards them during World War II in the United States see: Donald Teruo Hata, Dominique Hills, and Nadine Ishitani Hata, *Japanese Americans and World War II: Exclusion, Internment, and Redress* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995); Gary Okihito, *Whispered Silences: Japanese Americans and World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996); Roger Daniels, *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans During World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

⁴² Sledge, 148.

horrifying actions allowed for Americans to more easily accept that they were not fighting a similar man; they believed they were fighting animals.⁴³

Americans often categorized the Japanese soldier as an animal. Examples of this abound in the memories of veterans. One Marine told *Time* and *Life* correspondent John Hersey, “They take to the jungle as if they had been bred there, and like some beasts you never see them until they are dead.”⁴⁴ Another journalist, Ernie Pyle, quickly learned about the contempt held by Americans towards their Japanese counterparts when he arrived in the Pacific. In a report, he wrote, “...I gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.”⁴⁵

By likening the Japanese soldier to vermin, the Americans saw them as animals in need of extermination. The magazine *American Legion* featured a comic strip in 1944 that continued the idea that the Japanese were kin to rodents. The strip reads in part, “Well, which would you druther [sic] do – exterminate bug-insects [sic] or Japs!?” In response, another man said, “but slappin’ [sic] Japs is more satisfyin’ [sic].”⁴⁶ The strip conveyed to the reader that the Japanese were the same as insects in all but one respect; Japanese soldiers were more fun to kill.

The likening of Japanese people to animals, or sub-humans, led to the creation of many nicknames. Americans and their allies used many terms to describe their foe. “Nips”, “jackals”, “monkey-men”, and “sub-human” were used throughout the war. Some Marine staff attempted to bring the term “Japes” into everyday use. The term combined “Jap” and “apes.” Paul Fussell

⁴³ For Japanese atrocities during World War II see: Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ John Hersey, *Into the Valley: Marines at Guadalcanal* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1943), 56.

⁴⁵ Ernie Pyle, *The Last Chapter* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1945), 5.

⁴⁶ *American Legion Magazine*, October 1944, 52.

argued that “Japes” never became popular because the term “Jap” could easily be rhymed and fit into short motivating phrases.⁴⁷ “They’re Gonna [sic] Be Playing Taps on the Japs,” and “Let’s Blast the Jap Clean off the Map,” became popular phrases.⁴⁸ One book, adapted from the military training film *The Japanese Soldier*, used the term “Jap” abundantly. The book, simply titled *The Jap Soldier*, rarely refers to the Japanese in terms other than “Jap.”⁴⁹ The stereotypical training book, meant to educate the American soldier on every aspect of the Japanese character, further encouraged the racial divide.

Companies used the anti-Japanese rhetoric to bolster various marketing strategies. An ammunition cartridge company used a hunting analogy to promote their product. An illustration depicting the shores of Guadalcanal served as the background for a hunter setting his rifle sight on big game. The tagline for the advertisement read “Now Your Ammunition is Getting Bigger Game.”⁵⁰ The Japanese soldier served as the “bigger game” for Americans. The hunting depiction used by the cartridge company also gained use by other agencies.

The Tennessee Department of Conservation requested six million licenses to hunt the Japanese. The joke licenses would be priced at \$2 apiece. In return, the state replied, “Open Season for ‘Japs’ – no license required.”⁵¹ Pictured below is a “Jap Hunting License” from

⁴⁷ Fussell, 117.

⁴⁸ Dower, 81 and Fussell, 117.

⁴⁹ Arthur Goodfriend, *The Jap Soldier* (Washington, DC: The Infantry Journal, 1943).

⁵⁰ Dower, 89.

⁵¹ *TIME*, December 22, 1941, 13.

Wichita, Kansas. The son of the man identified as Charles on the license posted this image to a history blog. He stated his disbelief that his father espoused this kind of racism during the war.⁵²



Illustration 1: Jap Hunting License

The Cessna Keep'Em Flying Club, now known as the Textron Aviation Employees' Flying Club, produced two such licenses. The second production did not feature the Japanese head on a mount. It also omitted "OPEN SEASON DECLARED DEC. 7th, 1941."⁵³ Even without the imagery included on the first license, the message could not be clearer: the Japanese were to be hunted as animals.

Some organizations used a cartoonish, rather than animalistic, depiction of the Japanese to remind civilians to do their part to aid the war effort. One famous poster reminded Americans that "loose lips might sink ships."⁵⁴ Another poster, produced by GMC, encouraged Americans to be mindful of the things they said in a similar manner. The propaganda poster featured a

⁵² Ojibwa, "Museum 101: Capitalism and Ethnic Labor (Photo Diary)" *History for Kossacks* (blog), January 12, 2015 (7:49 a.m.), <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/01/12/1357113/-Museums-101-Capitalism-and-Ethnic-Labor-Photo-Diary>. The photograph and description are from a comment on this blog entry posted by user Marko the Werelynx.

⁵³ "WWII Homefront: Anti-Japanese," *Authentic History Center*, <http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/2-homefront/3-anti-jap/>.

⁵⁴ Seymour R Goff for Seagram Distillers Corporation, 1941-45, *Hagley Digital Archives*, <http://digital.hagley.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15017coll3/id/50/rec/3>.

Japanese man with large, ridiculous teeth, round-rim glasses, and the Rising Sun emblazoned hat. The artist gave the man oversized ears that resembled that of a mouse. The caption read in part, “Open trap make happy Jap.”⁵⁵ The company made the message clear, do not allow military plans or secrets to get into the hands of the enemy. However, the imagery worked on the subconscious of viewers to reinforce the idea that the Japanese were subhuman as well as foolish.



Illustration 2: Open Trap Make Happy Jap

Even Hollywood filmmakers profited by broadcasting racist depictions of the Japanese. A movie released in 1942, titled *Menace of the Rising Sun*, depicted the Japanese as subhuman in the promotional poster. An artist portrayed the Japanese antagonist as a sea monster, complete with tentacles, destroying American ships and planes. The monster had a cartoonish face with

⁵⁵ Created for GMC between 1939-1945, *University of Minnesota UMedia Archives*, <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/node/45648>.

oversized teeth, Japanese-style glasses, and slanted eyes. One tagline for the film read, “The Beast of the East!”⁵⁶



Illustration 3: Menace of the Rising Sun

Another film, *Destination Tokyo*, utilized hunting and animalistic imagery as well. The script featured the sendoff phrase “Good luck and good hunting” for Americans leaving for the Pacific. Toward the end of the movie, character General Slim soliloquized, “when the Japanese broke, and, snarling and snapping, were hunted from the field.”⁵⁷

American propaganda used the subhuman depiction of the Japanese to support the war effort. The Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Monica, California, created posters to promote the company’s material conservation programs. The text reads, “Tokio Kid say much waste of material make him so-o-o happy!”⁵⁸ Another poster reads, “Tokio Kid say - Good material

⁵⁶ *IMDB*, “Menace of the Rising Sun,” http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249804/taglines?ref_=tt_stry_tg.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Dower, 90.

⁵⁸ Douglas Aircraft Company, “Tokio Kid say Much waste of material make so-o-o happy!” Thank you. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institute, <http://sirius-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!174939!0>.

waste in scrap help to saving face for Jap. Thank you.”⁵⁹ Both posters depict a Japanese man, “Tokio Kid,” with fanged teeth protruding from his slobbering mouth. His fangs and pointed ears give him the resemblance of a reptile-like creature. The figure wears round-rim eyeglasses and a small hat decorated with the Rising Sun. The hat is fashioned in a way that it resembles the traditional Asian top-knot on the man’s head. Lastly, the man holds a dagger dripping with blood in both posters.



Illustration 4: Tokio Kid

The United States Navy produced similar posters to encourage Americans to salvage scrap metal. Art work titled “Salvage Scrap to Blast the Jap” promoted the material conservation cause. The poster showed a screaming bald eagle soaring above the planet. He dropped a bomb onto Japanese occupied territory below. An agitated snake sat protectively on the occupied island; his tail tightly gripping the land. As seen in previously mentioned posters, the snake has

⁵⁹ Jack Campbell and Douglas Aircraft Company, “Tokio Kid,” Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, http://hoohila.stanford.edu/poster/view_subject.php?posterID=US+6163.

large, protruding teeth and slanted eyes.⁶⁰ This advertisement further exemplified the subhuman characterization of the Japanese.

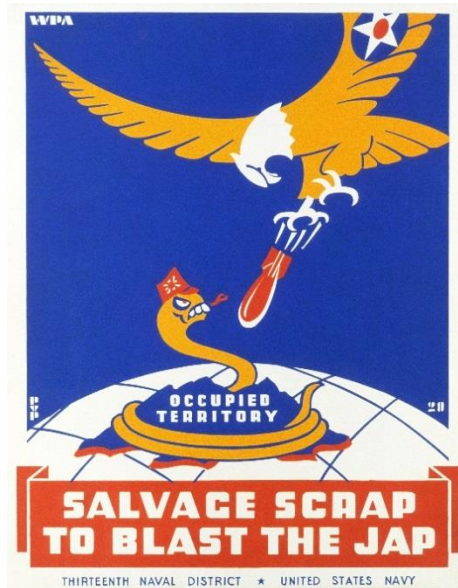


Illustration 5: Salvage Scrap

The collecting habits of American servicemen in the Pacific Theater of World War II certainly brings up questions relating to humanity. It is difficult to imagine the horror of being dropped into the jungle thousands of miles from home to fight an enemy that considered their death in battle an honorable exit from life and often times committed suicide rather than be captured.⁶¹ Part of the process of documenting the experience involved the practice of souvenir hunting. Marines, Sailors, and Army infantry alike searched the Japanese war dead for flags, photographs, field glass, and anything else that the man might have carried into battle. These

⁶⁰ Phil von Phul, "Salvage Scrap to Blast the Jap," 1940 or 1941, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98517448/>.

⁶¹ Robert Sheeks, "Civilians on Saipan," *Far Eastern Survey* 14, no. 9 (1945): 110-12.

items served as trophies and bartering leverage. However, personal property did not hold up as the most valuable item attainable.

When the companies, media outlets, and the military of the United States produced propaganda, they did so in a racially charged manner. The Japanese featured in posters, ads, and other media often look subhuman. Artists portrayed them as mice, snakes, and even squid. The idea that the Japanese were vermin incentivized the Americans abroad to treat them as such. Enlisted men hunted their Japanese foe. Once dead, the triumphant soldier treated the body as he would a deer slaughtered on the hunt. Just as the hunter would keep the deer's antlers as a trophy, so would the soldier keep the skull, teeth, or bones of the dead Japanese. However, hunting animals is a legal activity, taking the property or bones of a dead combatant is not.

Chapter Two

Legality and Ethics

In the May 1944 issue, *Life* magazine included a photo of a secretary, Natalie Nickerson, staring longingly at a skull on her desk while she penned a letter to her Navy lieutenant beau. Upon his departure for the Pacific, Natalie's boyfriend promised her a "Jap." He fulfilled his promise by mailing her a Japanese skull he found on the island of New Guinea. The skull featured the signature of the lieutenant and thirteen of his friends. Ms. Nickerson decided to name it "Tojo." At the end of the photo caption, the *Life* editor noted that the American military "disapprove strongly of this sort of thing."¹

The theft and looting of personal property in the Pacific Theater of World War II constituted a war crime by international and American standards. American soldiers serving in the Pacific often robbed live and dead Japanese soldiers in search of souvenirs. The soldiers returned home with flags, samurai swords, insignia, personal ephemera, and even body parts, including skulls, teeth, and other bones.² Many of the souvenirs then became display pieces for American museums to showcase victory in the Pacific.

Anthropologist Simon Harrison wrote two articles which focus on war trophies of the Pacific.³ Throughout the two articles, Harrison argued that the looting by American soldiers could be directly attributed to the racial propaganda of the United States military. He asserted

¹ *Life*, May 22, 1944, 35.

² Simon Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006):822.

³ Simon Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006): 817-836; and "War Mementos and the Souls of Missing Soldiers: Returning Effects of the Battlefield Dead," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. 4 (2008):744-790.

that the use of terms such as vermin and lice indicated the Americans' view of the Japanese as sub-human. As such, the killing of a sub-human creature is not unlike hunting.⁴

Similarly, John Dower researched the themes of race and superiority as it related to the Pacific Theater of World War II.⁵ Dower devoted a chapter of his book to the discussion of the mutual hatred between American and Japanese troops, racial propaganda, and war crimes. The author told the story of wanton violence through the memoirs of veterans. While the case for criminal misconduct is strong for both American and Japanese forces, Dower refrained from discussing war crimes. The title for his chapter is "War Hates and War Crimes," yet Dower only wrote about the hate and violence.

Another author, James Weingartner, offered a thesis similar to Harrison's and Dower's.⁶ He provided evidence that pointed to military racial propaganda as the leading factor contributing to the maltreatment of the enemy dead by American soldiers. He argued that the mutilation of the Japanese war dead created especially dangerous conditions for American soldiers serving in the Pacific. Weingartner asserted that as more Japanese people learned of the atrocious treatment of their war dead, the Japanese army became increasingly hostile toward American captured and wounded men. He did not include personal property in his analysis, instead he only focused on the removal of body parts from the battlefield. Weingartner provided an excellent study of the mistreatment of the Japanese dead, but he only briefly touched upon the

⁴ Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War": 820.

⁵ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

⁶ James Weingartner, "Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941-1945," *The Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1992): 53-67.

rules of war. His article referenced the 1929 Geneva Convention, but he did not mention the updated rules of war from the United States governing American military actions of 1940.⁷

A fourth author, Clifton Bryant, wrote a full monograph on crimes in the United States military.⁸ Bryant, a professor of sociology, used his research appointment at the United States Army Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences to craft his study of crimes against person and property. He asserted that the theft of personal property from the enemy dead is merely discouraged by the upper echelon of the military command, but he stopped short of calling the act a war crime. Bryant considered the theft of enemy military property, such as weapons and equipment, as a war crime since such items were to be turned over to the military. However, he stated that the theft of personal property was only discouraged because the United States military knew that soldiers exercised poor judgment when attempting to find souvenirs. While Bryant correctly observed that soldiers took dangerous chances to obtain war trophies, he neglected to recognize that such theft was in fact a war crime.

One author, Joanna Bourke, mentioned the maltreatment of enemy dead as a war crime. While Bourke spent a significant amount of time on the atrocities of the Vietnam War, she also broached the topic of war crimes in the Pacific Theater of World War II. She cited the Geneva Convention and the Rules of Land Warfare for the United States, but only in reference to killing or mistreating prisoners of war.⁹ In a section on trophy hunting, Bourke never called it a crime.

⁷ War Department, *Rules of Land Warfare*, FM 27-10 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940).

⁸ Clifton Bryant, *Khaki-Collar Crime: Deviant Behavior in the Military* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

⁹ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 173-5.

Instead, she provided insight as to why men might collect personal property and the bones of their dead enemy.¹⁰

The articles and books mentioned above all use similar primary sources. Diaries and memoirs of Pacific Theater veterans provide ample evidence to illuminate the widespread practice of souvenir hunting and the desecration of corpses. Some wrote of their own actions, while others recalled the activities of their fellow soldiers. Stories of bone collecting and trading souvenirs abound in the written recollections.¹¹

The rules of war serve many purposes. One of the purposes is to prevent atrocious things, such as the desecration of bodies and looting, from occurring. The Hague and Geneva Conventions of 1907 and 1906 respectively established several rules regulating the desecration of bodies, theft of personal property, and even misuse of the enemy flag. Amendments made to the Geneva Convention in 1929 expanded upon the existing laws of war. The “Convention for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field” sought to protect the wounded, dead, and prisoners of war.¹²

One of the major changes in the Rules of Land Warfare, particularly as it relates to this study, involved placing blame and responsibility on the individual committing the crime rather than the country to which they belonged. Prior to World War II, the laws of warfare bound countries. When a country’s soldier committed a war crime, the nation received punishment in the form of reparations. The laws also made accommodations for individuals who broke the

¹⁰ Ibid., 25-30.

¹¹ Robert Leckie, *Helmet for My Pillow*, (New York: Random House, 1957); Charles Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Harcourt, 1970); Allen Matthews, *The Assault* (New York: Random House, 1947); Sy M. Kahn, *Between Tedium and Terror* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Eugene Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹² International Committee of the Red Cross, *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field* (Geneva, Switzerland: ICRC, 1929).

international law by following the orders of a higher command. In those cases, the government, or high command, received the punishment. However, once the atrocities in all theaters of World War II came into the public view, lawmakers called for an amendment to be made. The solution came in November 1944. The Rules of Land Warfare received an update to amend that individuals, whether under orders from high command or not, who commit war crimes would be punished.¹³ In particular, this amendment allowed for the individual punishment of Germans who participated in acts against humankind, rather than just charging the German government. Following orders became an invalid excuse for committing war crimes.

The Navy Lieutenant boyfriend of Natalie Nickerson sparked an international backlash when *Life* magazine published the photo of his trophy skull. American readers responded to the magazine with comments such as “revolting and horrible” and “The head of the Navy lieutenant mentioned is without a doubt as empty as the skull pictured on the desk.”¹⁴ A memorandum from the Army’s Judge Advocate General, Major General Myron Cramer, stated that such actions were “repugnant to the sensibilities of all civilized peoples,” and in direct violation of the laws of warfare.¹⁵ The upper echelon of military leadership in the United States called upon officers to enforce the laws of war, particularly on the matter of maltreatment of the enemy wounded and dead. They feared that the publication of such incidents of lawlessness would provoke the Japanese to fight harder and mistreat American wounded, dead, and prisoners of war.¹⁶

¹³ William F. Fratcher, “The New Law of Land Warfare,” *Missouri Law Review* 22, no. 2 (April 1957): 145.

¹⁴ *Life*, June 12, 1944, 6.

¹⁵ Memorandum for the Assistant Chief of Staff as cited in Weingartner, 59.

¹⁶ Memorandum for the Director, Bureau of Public Relations, Colonel W. A. Schulgin, July 28, 1944 as cited in Weingartner, 60.

Word of the American mutilation of Japanese war dead reached Japan despite the call from military leaders to not publish stories about the actions. Domei, a Japanese news agency, condemned the acts. On one broadcast, Sadao Iguichi said,

No one who calls himself a human being, much less a civilized human being, can read such reports without feeling the most profound indignation. If such playing with human bones were the doing of African headhunters, it would be superfluous to make any comment, but concerning as it does people who claim to be paragons of human decency, honor, and righteousness, the matter cannot be left without our utmost serious consideration. If necessary, a representation will be made through the good offices of the Spanish Government, our protecting power.¹⁷

The Navy's attempt to find the person responsible for the incident did not work out as planned. The lieutenant, originally under General Douglas MacArthur's command, had been reassigned. MacArthur reported that the man's ship transferred its service to the fleet of Admiral Chester Nimitz.¹⁸ In November 1944, four months after the photo appeared in *Life*, Admiral Ernest King informed Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal that the Navy lieutenant exercised poor judgement when he took the skull. Furthermore, since proof of the skull's nationality could not be produced, Admiral King suggested that the man be reprimanded, but not harshly punished.¹⁹

The post-war trial of Max Schmid demonstrated the United States' commitment to holding war criminals responsible for their actions. Schmid, a German medical officer who served in France, took the head from a deceased American airman. German soldiers found the airman and delivered the body to Schmid's dispensary. He removed the flesh, boiled the skull, and then bleached it for preservation. Schmid kept the skull with him in France for months

¹⁷ Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, Far Eastern Section, August 4, 1944, as cited in Weingartner, 62.

¹⁸ Chief of Staff to Admiral Ernest King, August 31, 1944, as cited in Weingartner, 65.

¹⁹ Memorandum to the Secretary of the Navy, November 27, 1944, as cited in Weingartner, 66.

before sending it back to Germany as a souvenir for his wife. This story is strikingly similar to that of Natalie Nickerson, her Navy Lieutenant boyfriend, and the souvenir Japanese skull mentioned earlier. The difference is that the Navy Lieutenant received a minor punishment and had to promise not to do it again.²⁰ The United States charged Max Schmid with a war crime.

The United States General Military Government Court determined that Max Schmid “Did wilfully [sic], deliberately and wrongfully encourage, aid, abet and participate in the maltreatment of a dead unknown member of the United States Army.”²¹ The court used articles from the Geneva Convention of 1929 to prove the accused’s guilt. At Dachau, Germany, on May 19th, 1947, the court sentenced Schmid to ten years imprisonment for his actions. The military court cited Article 3 of the 1929 Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field which stated, “After each engagement the occupant of the field of battle shall take measures to search for the wounded and dead and to protect them against pillage and mal-treatment.”²² The case summary further noted Article 4 of the same convention which called for the burial or cremation of the body after a thorough exam to confirm death and an attempt to identify the dead person. The same article stated that belligerents, “shall further ensure that the dead are honourably interred that their graves are respected and marked so that they shall always be found.”²³ While the court did not cite rules

²⁰ Memorandum to the Secretary of the Navy, Admiral Ernest King, November 27, 1944, as cited in Weingartner, 66.

²¹ United States General Military Court at Dachau, Case no. 82, May 19, 1947. Found in United Nations War Crimes Commission, “Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals,” Vol 13 (1949), 151-2.

²² *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded and Sick of Armies in the Field*, July 17, 1929, art 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, art 4.

from the American forces Field Manual, it did mention that the United States and Britain impose “similar provisions.”²⁴

The rules of war also included provisions in regards to the personal property taken by American servicemen for souvenirs. Article 176, section B of the *Rules of Land Warfare*, explicitly outlawed the mistreatment and robbery of the dead. Robbing or mistreating the wounded by military members or civilians is also strictly forbidden. The crime of theft and maltreatment is considered a serious offense and is eligible for the maximum punishment of death.²⁵ Other sections contain more information relating to personal property. For instance, Article 177, section A calls for the exchange of information following hostilities. In this section, the rules state that belligerents are to collect and return personal effects.²⁶

Furthermore, Article twenty-three, section D of the Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, states that it is forbidden “to make improper use of a flag of truce, of the national flag, or of the military insignia and uniform of the enemy.”²⁷ The theft of a Rising Sun flag by an American soldier to bring home as a trophy relates to that particular section. While not explicitly stated in the text, turning a flag into a souvenir could be considered improper use. The rules under The Hague Convention further state that private property cannot be taken from individuals. In section three, articles forty-six and forty-seven outlaw the theft of private property and pillaging.²⁸ The United States ratified these rules of war in February 1909.²⁹

²⁴ United Nations War Crimes Commission, 151-2.

²⁵ War Department, *The Rules of Land Warfare FM 27-10* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940), 48.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷ War Department, *The Hague and Geneva Conventions* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

Regardless of the laws, American soldiers returned to the United States after the war with multitudes of Japanese war trophies and no punishment. Military officers simply discouraged trophy hunting for practical purposes.³⁰ Soldiers searching for souvenirs placed themselves in dangerous situations. For instance, the story of Robert Leckie which was mentioned in the previous chapter provides the perfect example of hazardous hunts.³¹

Another Marine, Allen Matthews, recounted a skirmish which ended with eight dead Japanese. Six of the eight dead soldiers owned sabers. The Marines quickly stripped them of their sabers and other valuable possessions before quitting the area.³² One of the lucky new owners of a saber walked across an open space simply to dare the enemy to fire. He drew no fire and came back carrying the saber across his back.³³ The Marine's tomfoolery could have cost him his life.

Dangerous maneuvers such as the ones mentioned by Leckie and Matthews explain why officers discouraged trophy hunting. One of the primary objectives for an officer is to keep the men under his command alive. Intentionally placing oneself in danger for the thrill of obtaining a trophy to show off or trade made their assignment much more difficult. The Japanese military certainly made conditions dangerous enough for the American soldiers.

In one case, a non-commissioned officer in Guadalcanal ignored orders to discourage trophy hunting by selling or trading his own. The Marine corporal created a shop to sell

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁰ Bryant. This theme runs throughout Bryant's analysis of souvenir hunting in the Pacific Theater during World War II.

³¹ Robert Leckie, *Helmet for My Pillow* (New York: Random House, 1957), 85-7.

³² Allen Matthews, *The Assault* (New York: Random House, 1947), 176.

³³ Matthews, 202.

Japanese items he stole or bought from other servicemen. His diverse collection consisted of skulls, canteens, helmets, and various other ephemera looted from the dead enemy.³⁴ Not only did he disobey orders, but he encouraged his men to participate in the collection of war booty by selling his own. Enlisted men could not be expected to follow the rules if the ones in charge of enforcing said rules chose not to follow them either.

The type of souvenir market developed by the corporal typically developed after battles in the Pacific.³⁵ The market enabled soldiers who came off the battlefield empty handed to buy a war trophy and develop their own story for how they acquired the item. Men who did not see combat, such as cooks or headquarter staff, had the opportunity to purchase an item when they never had the chance to find one for themselves. Souvenir black markets further weakened the laws of land warfare.

The laws of warfare, specifically those from 1940 as they directly relate to the Pacific Theater, outlaw the theft of personal property from enemy combatants and the desecration of dead bodies. The war trophies brought back by soldiers in the Pacific were stolen. One cannot possess clear title to stolen property. However, museums nationwide display these items. There are multiple problems which arise from these collections, one being an ethical contradiction. The American Alliance of Museums offers a reference guide for creating a collections management policy for museums. The original code of ethics did not make notice of stolen or illegally obtained property. After the two major world wars and the advancement in new technologies and flow of information, the AAM realized the need for an updated ethical code.³⁶

³⁴ Lamont Lindstrom and Geoffrey White, *Island Encounters: Black and White Memories of the Pacific War* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990): 142.

³⁵ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 139.

³⁶ Paul Perrot, "Museum Ethics and Collecting Principles," in *Museum Ethics*, ed. Gary Edson (New York: Routledge, 2005), 192.

In the document, the writers included a section for legal and ethical concerns. One of the topics mentioned in the segment is stolen or looted items. The code states,

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved
- collections in its custody are accounted for and documented
- access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.
- the unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections
- collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain
- competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.³⁷

People in charge of acquisitions at museums should not accession artifacts suspected of being obtained illegally.³⁸

Aside from the legal and ethical issues surrounding war souvenirs as display objects, their existence in American museums creates a narrative which does not include a true representation of the item. Instead, the objects aid in the creation of an American heroic narrative. One museum that has war trophies in their collection is the National Infantry Museum in Columbus,

³⁷ "Code of Ethics for Museums," *American Alliance of Museums* (2012), <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics>.

³⁸ "Developing a Collections Management Policy," *American Alliance of Museums* (2012), <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/continuum/developing-a-cmp-final.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

Georgia. In the museum's exhibit on World War II, various artifacts from the Pacific Theater are on display. The exhibit is housed in the gallery titled "World Power," a telling title for American domination. Upon entrance to the area focused on the war in the Pacific, the visitor is greeted with a sign stating, "Facing the Japanese." The introductory sign briefly tells the visitor that the battle between the Japanese and Americans became even bloodier due to mutual hatred and racism. The exhibit displays American propaganda posters to exemplify the racist feeling towards the foe. Instead of continuing the narrative of the war in this balanced manner, the museum displays the stolen property of the dead Japanese.

A bugle, flags, swords, and a sash are all displayed to create the narrative of American victory in the Pacific. The bugle is accompanied by a text panel which claims that James Hendry captured the object on the island of Leyte in 1944. Similarly, Bernard Strausbaugh captured a Japanese flag in Burma. The wording of these panels works around the word "stole." Stating that an object was captured suggests that it is a normal part of combat, just as one would capture the enemy. The narrative conveyed to the visitor through these objects does little to teach the visitor about American involvement in the Pacific.³⁹

The transformed interpretation of history stems from human interactions with objects. Authors have explored the idea of humans possessing the ability to change the identity of objects. In "Exceeding the Age in Every Thing': Placing Sloan's Objects," author James Delbourgo argues that objects somehow develop agency and create or maintain their own history and meaning. A collector cannot attribute value or meaning to items in his collection. Delbourgo further argues that "Global collecting is vulnerable," meaning that items taken out of

³⁹ *World Power (1920-1947)*, National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center, Columbus, GA. Information from author's notes.

their community of origin can lose their original use and value.⁴⁰ Taken out of original context, these objects become something different with new life and purpose.

Ian Hodder offered a more in-depth study of the relationship between humans and things in his monograph. Hodder argues that things depend on humans for their creation and humans depend on things for daily activities. He used Karl Marx's theories on objectification to craft his argument. According to Marx, alienation, or the estrangement of humans and things, means "a sense of loss of authentic or proper identity."⁴¹ Once a person strips an object of its original meaning or purpose, the item acquires a new one. To relate to this topic, a flag robbed from the body of a dead Japanese soldier loses its identity as a token of luck and protection and becomes a war trophy. Museums accession these war trophies and often use them to create heroic narratives of World War II veterans' actions in the Pacific.

Susan Pearce drew upon the works of Roland Barthes and Edmund Leach to form her argument about how objects "carry the past into the present."⁴² Barthes and Leach discussed the circumstances under which artifacts were created and used in the past and how they function in the present. For Leach, objects exist as "signs" when they are created and used in the manner originally intended. Items become "symbols" when used in a different context.⁴³

In the case of wartime souvenirs, the objects essentially have three phases. The first is the "sign" phase; when the Japanese created the objects in question and used them for their

⁴⁰ James Delbourgo, "'Exceeding in the Age of Everything': Placing Sloan's Objects," *Spontaneous Generations: A Journal for the History and Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 1 (2009): 44.

⁴¹ Quoted in Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 31.

⁴² Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 24. Specifically, Pearce examines the two following works: Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 27. Leach is primarily used in this explanation because Roland Barthes utilizes French words to craft his description.

intended purposes. The third phase, or “symbol,” remains the same as these objects now reside in museums and homes across America to tell a story of another time and place. However, I argue that there is another phase in between. To say that objects transform from sign to symbol insinuates that nothing happened in the middle. Yet something has to act upon the object to move it from one phase to another, be it human interaction or simply the passing of time. I will call this middle phase “trauma.”

There is a moment in time when the belongings of the Japanese war dead lost their original identity and became nothing more than a trophy or story-telling centerpiece. That moment occurred as soon as a soldier stripped the object from the body of the original owner. Previously, flags served as tokens of good luck from loved ones. Diaries were the means by which soldiers recorded their experiences. Photographs helped them pass the stressful time by remembering home. Once taken by American servicemen, these items left the realm in which they were created. The artifacts entered into a new existence with new meaning and value. While the souvenirs function as objects of remembrance, it is important to keep in mind that there are two existences the artifacts can serve to recall.

War souvenir displays began before the fighting even ended. Students in the public school district of Nyssa, Oregon frequently brought items their relatives either sent home or returned from war with for show-and-tell. In fact, so many students brought these items so often that the school district decided to create a museum display out of the objects. Students and faculty members collaborated to create a museum in the library of the school. The librarians emptied the library of books, so that the shelves could serve as make-shift display cases. Art students created text panels and mounted items to the walls. A large parachute hung from the middle of the room formed a new, themed ceiling for the space. Once the staff placed the war

souvenirs on the bookshelves, sheets of cellophane took the place of glass to protect the objects from curious patrons.⁴⁴

On the surface, the story of students and teachers collaborating to create an exhibit in the library seems inspirational. The cooperation between the two groups effectively created a new learning experience in a district that did not offer field trips to history museums.⁴⁵ However, the educational content of this exhibit is questionable. What did the visitor, in this case, the students, parents, faculty, and community, learn? The display taught American military excellence, or the heroic narrative suggested by James Dower. The author of an article on the display argued that the exhibit taught visitors about other cultures through objects not normally found on the North American continent.⁴⁶ Every item in the collection came to the United States by American military conquest in foreign lands. This exhibit harkened back to the early museum, a cabinet of curiosities. The items are not meant to tell a story, but instead they are simply for show.⁴⁷

Due to the way in which the objects on display were acquired, the narrative cannot effectively communicate merely an immersion in foreign culture. An American military member supplied every single item in the make-shift museum. The exhibit featured some American made items, like parachutes and uniforms, but the majority of the objects were trophies of war. Japanese swords, sabers, sandals, flags, and other ephemera made up the bulk of the collection.⁴⁸ The provenance of the exhibit content contradicts the idea that the museum supported multi-ethnic narratives.

⁴⁴ C. C. Harvey, "A School Exhibit of War Trophies," *The Journal of Education* 129, no. 8 (November 1946): 274-276.

⁴⁵ Harvey, 276.

⁴⁶ Harvey, 276.

⁴⁷ G. Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 3rd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 24-6.

⁴⁸ Harvey, 275.

Museums across the country feature displays with World War II objects. Many people walk past displays with signed Rising Sun flags or Japanese photographs and see nothing more than the ephemera of a decades old war. Items such as these in museums are creating a heroic narrative of American military involvement in foreign theaters of conflict. However, the objects on display were created by the Japanese to serve a different purpose. The signed Rising Sun flag meant to be a good luck charm for the bearer. Photographs and letters served as reminders of the loved ones at home. These things, taken out of their original context, received a new, foreign purpose and value when an American serviceman took them from the body of a dead Japanese soldier. It is ethically questionable for museums to accept the stolen objects from the Pacific Theater of war and to display them in an effort to craft a narrative in which their original purpose does not fit. One way to restore intrinsic value to the objects as well as promote forgiveness and reconciliation between the United States and Japan is to repatriate war souvenirs or display them with a balanced description which includes the object's original purpose and how it came to be in the United States.

Chapter Three

Repatriation and Reconciliation

Early one morning in 1994, Yvonne Boisclair ventured to a small house in the jungles of Japan to meet the family of Yoshiharu Tsunoi. She went to the home of his brother to present a signed silk Rising Sun flag she had obtained the year before. Boisclair received the flag the previous year from a World War II veteran who took it off of Yoshiharu's body in Bataan, in the Philippine Islands, in 1944. The late Japanese soldier's family never learned how or where Yoshiharu died, and the government never recovered his remains. For his brother, the silk flag represented the body the family never got to bury. The story of the return of Yoshiharu's flag illuminates one problem of taking personal property as war trophies.¹

In the past two decades, repatriation and reconciliation movements within American museums have mostly focused on Native American collections. The movement is an attempt to reconcile two cultures with an ugly past that marginalized and killed many people. Once robbed to land, property, and tradition, American Indians are getting back their ancestors remains and sacred artifacts.² There are other areas of museum and private collections which could benefit from repatriation. One in particular is collections of war souvenirs.

The most abundant literature on the topic of repatriation is that on the ethics of collecting and displaying Native American artifacts and the introduction of the Native American Graves

¹ Yvonne Boisclair, *The Flag of Yoshiharu* (Bella Vista, CA: Clearwood Publishers, 1996). The book chronicles the acquisition of the flag, the process of finding the late soldier's family, and the eventual return of the flag.

² Timothy McKeown, *In the Smaller Scope of Conscience: The Struggle for National Repatriation Legislation, 1986-1990* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012), 16, 47-8; see also Greg Johnson, *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 153-60.

Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 and other controversial exhibits.³

NAGPRA, signed by former President George H. W. Bush, required federally funded museums to take inventory of their collections involving Native American items. Museums carried the responsibility of repatriating skeletal remains, sacred objects and funerary ritual pieces to the appropriate tribes.⁴ NAGPRA provided one solution to what has been a difficult history between the United States and Native Americans.

A plethora of articles and case studies regarding repatriation emerged in the years following the introduction of NAGPRA. At the heart of the act is the effort to return skeletal remains as well as funerary, sacred, and cultural patrimony objects to the respective tribe.⁵ Federally funded museums must provide information about their collections to Indian tribes, including Alaskan and Hawaiian tribes. The inventory and dissemination of collections information regarding both artifacts and human remains had to be completed by November 1995.⁶

The cultural patrimony claim in NAGPRA enlarged the amount of objects that fell under the protection of the act. Virtually any item could fall under cultural patrimony; any artifact of historic, cultural, or traditional significance can be claimed by a Native American tribal representative. Even items with very little provenance can be repatriated. In one case, representatives of the Angoon Tlingits of Alaska visited the American Museum of Natural

³ A sampling of NAGPRA articles: Samuel Alberti, Rose Drew, Piotr Bienkowski, and Malcolm Chapman, "Should we display the dead?" *Museum and Society* 7, no. 3 (Nov 2009): 133-49; Jerome Rose, Thomas Green and Victoria Green, "Nagpra is Forever: Osteology and the Repatriation of Skeletons," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 81-103; Virginia Morell, "An Anthropological Culture Shift," *Science* 264, no. 5155 (1994): 20-22; James Bradley and John Bryant, "NAGPRA's Implications," *Science* 264, no. 5161 (1994): 890; Martha Graham and Nell Murphy, "NAGPRA at 20: Museum Collections and Reconnections," *Museum Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2010): 105-124.

⁴ Graham and Murphy, 105.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 106

History to review items relevant to their people. During a walk through the facility, one of the group members, Harold Jacobs, noticed a carved beaver. The catalog card only mentioned that a Lieutenant Emmons donated the object which he found in Alaska in 1911. However, Jacobs told the story of the beaver, originally a canoe prow piece, and claimed it for the Tlingits under cultural patrimony. The museum repatriated the piece to the tribe in Angoon, Alaska a short ten months later.⁷

The story of the Tlingit tribe and the wooden beaver demonstrated that the government and museums in America have developed a sensitivity to cultural artifacts relating to the Native American. For years, American archaeologists and souvenir hunters desecrated their burial grounds and looted cultural property. The actions of professional and amateur archaeologists hurt Native American and United States relations. Something seemingly as simple as an arrow head or as magnificent as a ceremonial headdress represents a piece of Native American history and culture. Now the government and museums are doing something to mend the hurt.⁸

The precedent set by NAGPRA could help Sino-American relations in the same way it has help relations between the American government and Native American tribes. Sino-American relations look similar, in a way, to those with the Native American tribes. Americans spent many years warring with Native Americans. Racism, stereotypes, and discrimination plagued the Indian tribes.⁹ Years of oppression and removal left a bitter taste in the mouths of

⁷ Ibid., 108-10.

⁸ Margaret Bruhac, "Lost and Found: NAGPRA, Scattered Relics and Restorative Methodologies," *Museum Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2010): 138-40.

⁹ Theda Perdue, "The Legacy of Indian Removal," *Journal of Southern History* 78, no. 1 (2012): 3-4.

many Native peoples.¹⁰ Similarly, the horrors of war can leave a person desensitized to the plight of their foe. American sentiment towards the Japanese proved hostile and racist. Many people in the United States viewed the Japanese people as no more than vermin to be crushed beneath American boot heels.¹¹ Stateside, the government forced people of Japanese lineage into internment camps to reside for multiple years, even citizens of the United States. Abroad, American servicemen looted the bodies of their dead foe, sometimes even taking their bones and teeth as souvenirs. Many items brought back to the United States from the Pacific Theater now reside in museums and homes across the country.

There is no government action or museum literature calling for Japanese cultural property to be returned. However, fundamentally, Native American and Japanese objects share similarities in cultural patrimony. The *Banzai* ceremonies, where people gifted flags, held in attendance friends, family, neighbors, and all of the most important and influential people in a man's life. The men who signed the flag each played a part in shaping the character of the young man going off to war.¹² The ceremony created a space in which people could bid farewell, share advice, and participate in Japanese tradition. The ritual surrounding the signed Rising Sun flags is enough to consider the items as cultural patrimony.

Furthermore, the ethical standards put forth by the American Alliance of Museums prohibits the collection of illegally acquired items. While these guidelines lack legal authority, following them is required for a museum to be a member of the organization. The AAM sets a

¹⁰ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian: The Crime that should Haunt America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); John Wunder, *"Retained by the People" a History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Peter Nabokov, *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-2000* (New York: Penguin Press, 1999).

¹¹ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 77-93.

¹² Boisclair, 49-51.

standard that all member museums should follow. The precedence set by the government through NAGPRA and the ethical guidelines of the AAM are enough to draw the conclusion that the war souvenirs currently in American homes and museums serve better purpose when returned to their rightful owners.¹³

An article in the *Chicago Tribune* suggested four ways of handling the souvenirs left behind by relatives. William Hageman, who is not a museum professional, recommended, “Display the items in your home, donate them to a museum or historical association, store them away, or sell them.”¹⁴ The author goes further to suggest that the owner search sites like eBay or hire an appraiser to determine the object’s value before making a decision. The next step in the article’s list is to gather provenance. The author warns that an item donated to a museum might end up being placed in storage or even sold. The vague nature of the objects mentioned in the article (i.e. “war souvenirs”) makes the writer’s neglect of repatriation harder to ascertain. While the article does specifically mention uniforms, it also cited “other mementos” and “war souvenirs.” In the case of souvenirs, the Hageman overlooked the opportunity to increase public awareness about repatriation. His platform with the *Chicago Tribune* would have allowed him to reach a large audience on the subject.

The Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City possesses a collection of Japanese ephemera obtained by Americans during the war. One large display case holds multiple Japanese Rising Sun flags donated to the museum by various patrons. The flags all bear the signatures of the Japanese soldiers’ loved ones. Matt Reed, who works in the collections of the

¹³ “Developing a Collections Management Policy.” American Alliance of Museums (2012). <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/continuum/developing-a-cmp-final.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

¹⁴ William Hageman, “Finding a place of honor: How to handle those family war souvenirs stashed in the back of the closet,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 2010, Accessed March 1, 2015, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-10-26/features/sc-fam-1026-veteran-memorabilia-20101026_1_war-souvenirs-appraisers-association-frame.

History Center, said that the half-Japanese girlfriend of a staff member translated the names. When asked if he felt that the museum had an ethical obligation to repatriate the items to Japan he replied that he did not feel they should return the items as they are war trophies and rightfully belong to the institution.¹⁵

The display of flags, uniforms, weapons, and personal effects at the History Center does not pretend to simply represent the Japanese experience in war. Four of the aforementioned signed Rising Sun flags serve as backdrops for one display case. The text panel accompanying the items reads,

Why do we have Japanese items on display and what is their tie to Oklahoma? Items in this case come from a variety of sources, but many of them came from Oklahoma veterans returning from the war bringing back souvenirs they had collected from various theaters of action, such as the Philippines.

While museum staff know where these objects originate, nothing has been done to return them.

While it may be difficult to return some things, flags from *banzai* ceremonies bear signatures of family members, which makes it easier to identify surviving relatives.¹⁶ The History Center already took the step of translating the names. Their next step could be to contact an organization dedicated to the return of personal effects. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare as well as other groups, like the Association of Peace and War Mourning, work to locate the surviving relatives. The technological advances available to aid the search for surviving family members leaves little room for further excuses for not returning items.

A more macabre type of souvenir in American museums is human remains. A recent case at the University of California Berkeley brought renewed attention to the subject of

¹⁵ Noble Foundation Gallery, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, OK; Matt Reed, interview with author, June 20, 2014. Other information from author's notes.

¹⁶ Boisclair, 49-51.

desecrating war dead remains. The UC Berkeley Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology houses the skeletons of several Japanese people collected on the island Saipan. A San Francisco news agency reported on the matter in late 2009.¹⁷ Dr. Max E. Childress, a Navy doctor lieutenant, collected the remains during his time in Saipan. Childress claimed to take the skeletons for osteological research. Permission to remove the remains came from another lieutenant in the form of a one-sentence note. The short communication allowed Childress to claim the skeletons for the “purpose of osteological research.”¹⁸ The museum’s item description of the remains reads, “Japanese who committed suicide during the American invasion.”¹⁹ Authors, armed with memoirs and video evidence, have documented the mass suicides by Japanese combatants and civilians who were afraid of surrendering to the Americans.²⁰ The remains in storage at UC Berkeley are not classified as to whether they are that of civilians or combatants.

The issue raised by the news agency is that the keeping of war dead remains is in direct conflict with the Geneva Convention. Naval War College law Professor Dennis Mandasger noted that normally, combatants receive a battlefield burial or repatriation to their country of origin. He added, “How would a parent or spouse feel if the remains of a spouse or son were stuck in a museum in Tokyo?”²¹ An expert on the laws of war, Yoram Dinstein of the University of Tel Aviv, invoked the Geneva Convention in his disagreement with the practice at Berkeley.

¹⁷ Jim Doyle, “Japanese war dead skulls at UC museum: Apparent Geneva violation,” *SFGate* (August 16, 2009), <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Japanese-war-dead-skulls-at-UC-museum-3220030.php>.

¹⁸ Quoted in Doyle.

¹⁹ Doyle.

²⁰ Robert Sheeks, “Civilians on Saipan,” *Far Eastern Survey* 14, no. 9 (1945): 110-12.

²¹ Quoted in Doyle.

The Geneva Convention, signed by both the United States and Japan, called for combatants to ensure the honorable burial of enemy war dead. Dinstein said, “I don’t think that keeping skulls and bones of the dead in a museum is in harmony with that (the Geneva Convention provision).”²²

Another article, published ten days later for *Berkeley Voice*, provided more information from the university. The school mentioned that employees were “engaged in careful and complicated discussions” regarding the remains.²³ University spokesman, Dan Mogulof, attempted to downplay the existence of the remains in the storage facility, which is located beneath a swimming pool, by noting that the museum currently possesses approximately 11,000 skeletons from multiple areas of the world. However, these remains fall under the category of war dead according to the Geneva Convention. Mogulof’s statement as to why the school did not begin the repatriation process with Japan was, “We can’t simply box them up and send them some place absent knowledge of somebody or some entity that wants them, is ready to accept them and has a legitimate claim to repatriate them without the substantiating information required to return them and the circumstances as to why they died.”²⁴

Mogulof’s statement provides a good example for why repatriating skeletal remains can be difficult. Typically, it would be the Japanese government requesting proof that the remains are indeed Japanese. In this case, Berkeley officials not only want proof that they are Japanese, but also evidence that the bodies were that of soldiers. Lawyers for the school reasoned that if

²² Quoted in Doyle.

²³ Doug Oakley, “U.S., Japanese governments investigate origins of human bones stored at UC Berkeley,” *Berkeley Voice* (August 26, 2009), http://www.insidebayarea.com/search/ci_13210059#.

²⁴ Quoted in Oakley.

the bones are that of civilians, then no law has been broken.²⁵ Such interpretations fail to account for ethical dilemmas. According to the information obtained from Childress, he took the bones from hospitals in which he worked while stationed in Saipan. Instead of allowing the bodies to be peacefully interred, he removed them from their country of origin to be studied. Even a UC Berkeley medical anthropology professor agreed with Mandasger and Dinstein that the bones need to be returned. Professor Nancy Scheper-Hughes argued, “Is this ethically correct? No, because these are historical remains and war booty. They’re ill-gotten goods.” She questioned why the university failed to take the steps to identify the bodies.²⁶

The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology offers a searchable catalog of their collection online. A quick search through their database reveals that the museum still possesses the remains. Catalog entries 12-11061 through 12-11066 are described as follows, “Japanese who committed suicide during the American invasion.”²⁷ There is no mention of how the bones came into the possession of Dr. Childress. The museum stopped accepting skeletal remains more than twenty-five years ago.²⁸ Below is a catalog card for item number 12-11066.

²⁵ Oakley.

²⁶ Quoted in Doyle.

²⁷ Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://pahma.berkeley.edu/>.

²⁸ Oakley.

Cat. No.	See Description	Acc. No.	Date Coll.	Date Acc.	Mus. Loc.
		3076	1945	1974	
Collector	Max E. Childress, M.D.			Donor	Max E. Childress, M.D.
Location Saipan, Japan					
Description/Cat. Nos. (Japanese who committed suicide during the American invasion) 12-11061 to 12-11066					
7/73					

Illustration 6: Catalog Card

For most collectors and museums, souvenirs from the Pacific Theater of World War II serve as objects of remembrance. However, it is the memories they recall that differ from the object's original meaning or purpose. Ian Hodder's analysis of human-thing entanglement and estrangement ideas can be applied to war souvenirs. Humans create things. Things rely on humans to give them meaning, value, and care. Humans then depend on things to make other things or make life more convenient.²⁹ The Japanese created Rising Sun flags out of silk and then provided them with meaning and value. They served as going away gifts for sons, fathers, neighbors, and friends. Loved ones gifted the flags with great ceremony. Soldiers then took these flags into war and depended upon them as good luck charms. The flags depended upon the Japanese soldier to protect them from damage. Once an American took the flag from a body, it became something different. It became a souvenir, or an object taken to prove involvement in the war.

²⁹ Hodder, 64. Ian Hodder uses an airplane as an example. Humans create the airplane out of other things and depend upon it for safe and efficient travel. However, the airplane relies on humans for repairs, upkeep, and fuel. This brings about entanglement in the human-thing relationship (things depend on humans depend on things).

Susan Pearce discussed the “lives” of objects in one of her works. She argued that artifacts possess the ability to outlive their creators. Because of this, items can “carry the past into the present by virtue of their ‘real’ relationship to past events...”³⁰ Pearce’s argument aligns with Hodder in the sense that objects endure over different temporalities.³¹ While the amount of veterans from World War II slowly diminishes in number, their souvenirs continue to exist. Once all veterans have passed on from this world, all researchers will have left to tell the story of the war, besides oral histories and memoirs, are the war associated artifacts.

Pearce and another author, Meredith Brown, believe that the ability to transport the past into the present is part of what makes the collections in a museum so unique. The idea that museum artifacts exist in both the past and the present means that they are of significant interpretation value. Brown argued that things, especially touching things, help people become interested in and learn history. She continued this thought by writing that things teach people about history without traditional book learning. The ability to see history, rather than just imagine it, helps people connect with history in a matchless manner. Brown’s examples included a piece of Adolf Hitler’s toilet bowl, a compass, and a pistol among several others.³²

Brown’s analysis of history you can touch can be useful to the study of Pacific Theater war souvenirs as teaching tools. A veteran’s story can come alive if items from the actual events are presented. Similarly, museum exhibitions use donated war trophies to teach visitors about American involvement in the Pacific Islands. The museums mentioned in this chapter do not teach about Japanese culture and the meaning behind the artifacts presented. The items serve as

³⁰ Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 24.

³¹ Hodder, 5.

³² Meredith Mason Brown, *Touching America’s History: From the Pequot War through World War II* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 1-3.

decorative backdrops in display cases or demonstrate American military excellence. However, just like the problem with the school house exhibit in Nyssa, Oregon, whose history are the museum exhibits teaching?

The National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana actively solicits the donation of period souvenirs. The “Give” section of the museum website features a list of artifacts people can donate. Along with various weapons, uniforms, and scrapbooks is a call to donate Japanese items. The description reads, “Yes, we are collecting military and non-military items made in Japan during the war and occupations.”³³ The vague nature of the statement allows for much interpretation as to what the museum wishes to add to their vast collection. Further on in the donation document, museum staff rule out the donation of Japanese Katanas and Samurai swords as they are already at their desired number.

The National World War II Museum accepts the items brought back from the Pacific Theater of war to display or hold in storage. In a museum display, these objects symbolize American heroics and military superiority rather than Japanese culture. The items lost their original identity and became symbols in a culture where they were never intended to exist. Museums could attempt to craft a narrative which includes both identities of the objects. On one side, these items are souvenirs, or trophies, and that fact is shown by their very existence in an American museum. However, museums with these collections could do more to educate the visitor about the objects’ origins and original use.

³³ *The National World War II Museum*, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/give/donate-an-artifact/common-world-war-ii-donations.html?>.

Simon Harrison calls war trophies “transgressive objects of remembrance” in the title of one of his journal articles.³⁴ The title is telling of the violation of internationally accepted rules in war during the practice of souvenir hunting. However, museums in America routinely display looted artifacts from the Pacific Theater of World War II. Curators and collections staff strip items of their original purpose and value to fit them into a heroic narrative of America’s involvement in the war. In doing so, objects become something they were never intended to be. They lose their meaning and take on the forced identity of an American trophy. The actions of American museums do a disservice to museum patrons in neglecting to tell the whole story of an object.

Due to the lack of literature on the subject, it is possible that most museums with war souvenirs have not considered repatriation. However, a number of World War II veterans and their families have thought about returning items and have acted upon those ideas. Repatriation of Japanese war trophies by American veterans or their families became popular in the 1990s and into the 2000s.³⁵ A number of factors contributed to this phenomenon. For one, the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over Japan brought the war in the Pacific to the forefront of American news.³⁶ Another reason could be that as veterans advance in age they become more willing to forgive and move on past their often devastating war experiences. When the return of booty is

³⁴ Simon Harrison, “Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006): 817-836

³⁵ S. Blow, “War Atrocity Proves Tough to Put to Rest,” *The Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), March 14, 1993; Jim Camden and Reiko Ito Tateya, “Flag from a Father,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), September 21, 2014, <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2007/jan/28/flag-from-a-father/>; K. Cusack, “Vet returns WWII flag to Japanese,” *Miami Herald* (Miami, FL), June 20, 1987; Andy Dabilis, “Guadalcanal plus 50 vets seek to return grim booty to Japanese,” *Boston Globe* (Boston, MA), Aug. 7, 1992; Akiko Fujita, “Okinawa Battle Flag Returned to Owner’s Family,” *ABC News* (Tokyo, Japan), July 31, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/okinawa-battle-flag-returned-owners-family/story?id=19802907>; Chuck Haga, “Mementos of War , Tokens of Healing - Some WWII Vets Want to Repatriate Battle Souvenirs,” *Star Tribune: Newspaper of the Twin Cities* (Minneapolis, MN), June 5, 2004. These are merely a sampling of the vast amount of articles recounting the stories of World War II veterans or their family members repatriating war souvenirs to Japan.

³⁶ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 147-8.

initiated by surviving family members it may be that they are so far separated from the war experience that they feel repatriating items is a healing process for both families and nations.³⁷

Organizations in Japan and the United States assist with the repatriation of war souvenirs. The Association for Peace and War Mourning, OBON, and the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare often cooperate to return war related items to the surviving family. The APWM returned fifty-four battle flags just between the years 2000 and 2013. The non-profit group even managed to return eight fountain pens, twenty-six photos, and nine diaries in the same time period.³⁸ The APWM makes biannual trips to islands in the Pacific to search for bodies and personal property to return to Japan as well.

Another non-profit organization, OBON, seeks to gather Japanese battle flags to repatriate to Japan. OBON, founded by Rex and Keiko Ziak of Astoria, Oregon, is named after a Japanese time of year to honor the spirits of ancestors.³⁹ OBON uses scholars to translate names and messages on the good luck flags. The husband and wife duo collaborate with ministries in Japan and religious leaders to aid in searching for the surviving family. Organizations such as this one are integral to the repatriation process. Most people do not have the resources or knowledge necessary to return items on their own. OBON and the APWM enable war souvenirs to return to the country in which they belong.

On March 23, 2015, OBON and the 41st Infantry Division of the National Guard hosted an event where people could return stolen flags. Prior to the ceremony, the Ziaks had collected

³⁷ Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War": 819.

³⁸ *Association of Peace and War Mourning*, <http://www.senbotsusya.com/en/>.

³⁹ Kyle Spurr, "Peaceful return: Couple aims to reunite treasured flags with Japanese families," *The Daily Astorian*, March 20, 2015, Accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.dailyastorian.com/Local_News/20150320/peaceful-return; see also Yoichiro Kodaera, "American couple on mission to return Hinomaru battle flags to Japan," *The Asahi Shimbun*, June 18, 2014, Accessed March 26, 2015, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201406180011.

approximately 100 flags. About thirty of those flags have been returned to Japanese families to date. Since Keiko Ziak is a Japanese native, she brought a knowledge of Japanese government and geography that Rex Ziak lacked. Her expertise is reinforced with a passion for the work because of a personal experience with the return of a battle flag. Keiko Ziak's grandfather perished in Burma in World War II and his body never returned home. One day, a military ephemera collector's son reunited the family with Keiko's grandfather's flag. The family created a shrine for the object in the deceased's brother's home. Rex's familiarity with the American government and Keiko's Japanese heritage make them an excellent team for the work that they seek to accomplish.⁴⁰

The return of Yoshiharu Tsunoi's Rising Sun flag is a well-documented story of repatriation of war loot. Each soldier received a linen flag from the government, but flags given by family were special.⁴¹ Veteran Jesse Campbell found more than just a war trophy. He found a cultural symbol and a personal family keepsake. Yvonne Boisclair travelled to Japan to return the flag to the Tsunoi family a year after receiving it from Campbell. It took time to have the flag translated and then to have someone locate the family in Japan. The Boisclair's also had to arrange the costly trip. The flag could have been mailed, but Boisclair felt that bringing the flag to Japan personally symbolized a sort of healing process between the two cultures.⁴²

Her line of thinking appeared to be correct. She presented the silk flag to Yoshiharu Tsunoi's only living sibling, Hideo Tsunoi. Tsunoi became quiet and reserved while he unfolded the material. He could not speak for a small time as he carefully read the signatures and

⁴⁰ Spurr.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴² Boisclair, 75.

phrases.⁴³ After the reverent pause, Boisclair asked him if he remembered the flag. He remembered everything about the flag including the Banzai ceremony, the people in attendance, and the feeling of gloom in knowing that his brother would not return home alive.⁴⁴ The return of Yoshiharu's flag brought Hideo Tsunoi a sense of closure. Even though it took more than fifty years, the flag is the only part of Yoshiharu that made it home from the war.

Another story of repatriation in the 1990s emerged in Cincinnati, Ohio. A Marine who chose to remain anonymous served for nearly two years on Guadalcanal. After he and several of his fellow servicemen went souvenir hunting on the island, the group ended up with a stash of various trophies including personal ephemera and body parts. The men boiled a head to remove the skin and brain. "G," as the soldier chose to be called, returned to the United States with the skull.⁴⁵

The veteran contacted a reporter, David Wecker, about the skull in 1993. Mr. G told Wecker that the skull had sat on a basement shelf in his home since he returned to the states. The fiftieth anniversary announcements brought his attention to the skull and the thought of returning it to Japan. Mr. G agreed to an interview with Wecker in which he denied remorse for his actions on Guadalcanal and trophy taking. During the interview he said,

Don't get me wrong – it's not like I'm remorseful. War is war. After the devastation the Japanese warlords ordered against our country in 1941, I can never forgive or forget Pearl Harbor. On the other hand, if we're having celebrations here, maybe they're having celebrations in Japan. I'm thinking, this skull oughta [sic] go back to Japan. Anyhow, I'm at a point where I'd really like to get rid of it.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33-4.

⁴⁵ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 148.

⁴⁶ David Wecker, "What Would You Do With A Skull?" *The Cincinnati Post* (Cincinnati, Ohio), April 13, 1993.

Mr. G's motives behind the repatriation of the skull he obtained on Guadalcanal differed from Yvonne Boisclair's. However, he lived during Pearl Harbor and fought in the Pacific once the United States declared war on Japan. His experiences in the war provided him with a different perspective in regard to his war trophy. However, in the end, no matter how Mr. G felt about the war and the Japanese, he still felt that the skull needed to be returned to Japan for proper burial. He entrusted the skull to Wecker to return to Japan.

Wecker then experienced the difficulty that comes with attempting to repatriate bones. He first contacted the closest Japanese consulate, which was located in Detroit, Michigan. The Japanese officials refused to assist Wecker because of the skull's lack of provenance. The reporter could not prove that the skull was from a Japanese soldier and therefore they could not help him. Fortunately, Wecker made contact with a group of film makers about to travel to the Solomon Islands. The group agreed to take the skull with them because they knew of Japanese priests who scour the islands yearly in search of human remains. The film makers then gave the skull to the priests for burial.⁴⁷

Wecker's difficulty in returning the skull to Japanese authorities was commonplace. The remains of war dead are difficult to repatriate. The Japanese and United States governments are reluctant to accept and return the remains of Japanese war dead without ironclad provenance.⁴⁸ Officials have good reason for sometimes rejecting such items. While the bones can be dated, they cannot always be identified.

However, the complicated and intensive funerary practices of the Japanese suggest that bones should be returned. Part of the traditional funeral involves a "bone-picking" ceremony

⁴⁷ Wecker.

⁴⁸ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 148.

following cremation. The bones are picked from the ashes with chopsticks and placed in an urn.⁴⁹ Since mortuary rituals are so significant in Japanese culture, it would make sense for the bones of deceased Japanese soldiers to return to their country of origin rather than collect dust in an American basement. Memorial ceremonies last for years following the death; therefore it can never be too late to return an object of remembrance.⁵⁰

Another reporter, Steve Blow from Texas, received a request from the relative of a Dallas veteran wishing to return a Japanese skull brought home from the war. The man, referred to only as “M,” had a particularly macabre story of how his relative acquired the skull. The Marine and his fellow soldiers captured a Japanese sniper. With no way to return the prisoner to headquarters, the men executed him. After committing one war crime by killing a prisoner, the men then decapitated him and boiled his head. The Marines wrote “One Dead Jap” on the forehead and decorated it with their signatures, monikers, and hometowns. The men named the skull Sam.⁵¹

The reporter questioned Mr. M about his veteran relative, but he wished to distance himself from the process of repatriation. In his newspaper column, Blow wrote:

M. said his relative, who wishes to remain anonymous, is now filled with remorse. ‘He’s a different person now – religious and a family man.’ Several years ago he asked M. to help him return Sam to Japan. M. made a few phone calls at the time and got nowhere. So Sam remained in a closet until recently, when M. decided to try again and called the newspaper. ‘I think he’s a soldier that rates a ticket back home,’ M. said. ‘He defended his country just as we defended ours. I think he deserves to be buried with Japanese honors.’⁵²

⁴⁹ Yohko Tsuji, “Mortuary Rituals in Japan: The Hegemony of Tradition and the Motivation of Individuals,” *Ethos* 34, no. 3 (2006): 395.

⁵⁰ Tsuji, 392.

⁵¹ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 148-9.

⁵² Steve Blow, “War Atrocity Proves Tough to Put to Rest,” *The Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), March 14, 1993.

Mr. M gave the skull to Blow in the hopes that he would return it. In Blow's ignorance of the repatriation process, he simply mailed it the Japanese Consulate in Houston. Instead of keeping the skull, or turning it over to authorities, the Consulate mailed it back to Blow. A letter to him explained their refusal to undertake the task of returning the skull to Japan. Fortunately for Blow, a reader of his column suggested contacting a priest who had advocated and assisted in the repatriation of Japanese war dead. Blow mailed the skull to the priest in Tokyo. From there, the priest worked to have the remains buried.⁵³

Not all repatriation stories originate out of regret, remorse, or even the announcement of fiftieth anniversary events. One case resulted from a drug raid. In June 2003, police discovered a defaced skull while searching a home for illegal narcotics. The skull belonged to Julius Papas before he passed away. His great-grandson inherited the skull following his death. Written on the skull were the words:

THIS IS A GOOD JAP
GUADALCANAL S.I.
11-NOV-42
OSCAR
M.G. J. PAPAS U.S.M.C.⁵⁴

The family members of the deceased veteran demanded that the skull be returned to them. To them, the skull had become an heirloom that represented Papas' service to his country.⁵⁵

⁵³ Harrison, *Dark Trophies*, 149.

⁵⁴ Patrick Malone, "Macabre mystery: coroner tries to find origin of skull found during raid by deputies," *Pueblo Chieftain* (Pueblo, Colorado), Nov. 2, 2003.

⁵⁵ Harrison, "Skull Trophies of the Pacific War": 817-8.

The family did not see the skull again. The coroner for Pueblo County contacted the Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii to help with analyzing the skull. The CILHI confirmed what the writing on the skull suggested that it was that of a young male of southern Japanese descent. They dated the time of death as circa 1942. Following the investigation they sent the skull to Tokyo via the Japanese Ministry of Health.⁵⁶ In this case, since the skull had been identified as that of a Japanese soldier, the government accepted it for burial.

The repatriation of ephemera like flags, diaries and photos is much easier than attempting to return a body part. Flags and other personal property are simpler to identify because they often had names or hometowns printed on them somewhere. Yoshiharu Tsunoi's flag had many signatures and other identifying markings which made the search for his relatives less difficult. Alongside the stories of veterans or their relatives trying to return skulls are stories of people returning the personal effects of Japanese war dead.

One particularly touching story is that of Herb McDougall, a veteran of the war who fought in the Pacific. After the battle for Okinawa, McDougall found a blood-stained Rising Sun flag in a cave. In May 2013, McDougall's son and daughter-in-law found the flag while cleaning the elderly veteran's house. With his father's permission, Kim, McDougall's son, set about finding the owner. Kim McDougall had the flag translated. The translator, Aki Suzuki, was shocked to find that her hometown, Senju, was written on it. Once she had the name of the flag's owner, she called a police officer in Tokyo. He helped Aki track down the dead soldier's son, Tadatoshi Hoshi. In July 2013, Aki presented the flag to Hoshi in Tokyo.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ James Kramer, "Skeletal Remains Evaluation and Investigation," *Coroner Investigative News* (Pueblo, Colorado), 2003.

⁵⁷ Akiko Fujita, "Okinawa Battle Flag Returned to Owner's Family," *ABC News* (Tokyo, Japan), July 31, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/okinawa-battle-flag-returned-owners-family/story?id=19802907>.

The return of Herb McDougall's war trophy is an example of how much easier it is to return personal property than bodily remains, but also how it is equally significant. McDougall himself never claimed ownership of the flag. He said, "I did not own the flag. I never did own it. Even when I got it, it belonged to somebody else."⁵⁸ McDougall's words speak volumes about the emotional connection between personal effects from the battlefield and familial ties. Many of the Japanese war dead never returned home. When Tadatoshi Hoshi received his fallen father's flag, he felt as if his father had returned home at last. Hoshi's father left for war when he was only three years old. Upon the return of the flag, Hoshi said, "My father's spirit has finally come home."⁵⁹

A similar story is that of American veteran Kenneth Udstad. Udstad took a Rising Sun flag from the body of a dead Japanese soldier on the island of Tinian in 1944. The flag, among other personal effects he took as souvenirs, sat in a box at his home in Aurora, Illinois, for sixty-eight years. Once he heard of a fellow veteran returning his souvenirs to Japan, Udstad thought it would be a good idea to return his own. Members of his church congregation assisted the ninety-two year old Udstad in translating the writings and determining the flag's place of origin.⁶⁰

Udstad contacted government officials from the Shizuoka Prefecture who were happy to receive the items and locate the surviving family. The veteran travelled to Japan where he met with officials from Shizuoka. He returned the flag along with photographs, a hat, papers, and a notebook he took from dead soldiers while in Saipan. Udstad had simple words about returning

⁵⁸ Fujita.

⁵⁹ Fujita.

⁶⁰ Seth Robson, "Japanese WWII flag, taken as a war trophy, returns in friendship," *Stars and Stripes*, Dec. 11, 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/japanese-wwii-flag-taken-as-a-war-trophy-returns-in-friendship-1.256767>.

the items, “I knew it would do the family a world of good compared to what it was doing for me.”⁶¹ For the Japanese officials, the return of the flag meant more. Kazuhiko Togo, the grandson of Japan’s foreign minister throughout World War II, felt that the veteran coming to their country and returning the flag symbolized a new friendship and the continuing relationship rebuilding between the United States and Japan.⁶²

The return of war souvenirs by American veterans can offer a sense of closure and forgiveness to parties of both the United States and Japan. For museums, the same sentiments can be found, but with a different audience. G. Ellis Burcaw wrote, “Hand-in-hand with this natural tendency to collect things is the desire to show them to others, to seek approval and admiration...”⁶³ If museum professionals can break away from the desire to showcase souvenirs as evidence of military heroics, or even balance the narrative to respect the enemy, then a real conversation can begin about the place of Japanese war trophies in American museums.

⁶¹ Robson.

⁶² Robson.

⁶³ G. Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 3rd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 24.

Conclusion

The rampant souvenir collecting in the Pacific Theater of World War II by American military members constituted a war crime. While that phrase, war crime, carries a heavy meaning following the atrocities of the Holocaust and the Rape of Nanking, it does accurately describe the illegal actions surrounding souvenir hunting. American soldiers, Marines, and Navy men desecrated the bodies of the dead Japanese by removing bones and teeth. Photographs of men boiling skulls in preparation to return to the United States are horrifying to the average viewer. Besides mutilating bodies, the men dishonored their foe by stealing personal property to save as trophies and souvenirs. The Hague and Geneva Conventions along with the American Rules of Land Warfare outlaw looting and the mistreatment of enemy dead.

Accepting stolen artifacts is a commonly known ethical violation for museums and archives. Since war souvenirs are illegally obtained goods, museums and archives should not accept them. Furthermore, displaying the war loot from the Pacific Islands in American museums does a disservice to the visitor. Museum patrons do not learn about the artifact itself, where it was made, its significance, who it originally belonged to. Instead, people learn about American heroics and military might.

The traditional interpretation principles set by Freeman Tilden do not accommodate for stolen property. Tilden stated, “Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.”¹ A new interpretation for this principle can mean that presenting only a part of an object’s life does not do the artifact justice. A museum display should include all three phases, sign, trauma, and symbol, to accurately

¹ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 34-5.

interpret the object. The Japanese artifacts commonly seen in displays on World War II were created for a purpose outside of American culture and influence. Changing the narrative of the objects on display alters their identity. The items serve as objects of remembrance, but it might be more appropriate to mean Japanese remembrance.

One way to deal with stolen goods is to repatriate them. Repatriation of war trophies can further strengthen Japanese-American relations and provide closure to those involved in the process. The Japanese recipients can feel a sense of closeness to the one lost in war whose body possibly never returned. Returned property in some cases functions as the body that never came home. For American veterans, repatriating war souvenirs provides closure to a part of their lives that most will never understand. The struggle, stress, and grief that comes with the war experience sometimes lives on in the objects brought home. For American servicemen, returning them is like returning the horrible memories.

While the works concerning collecting during World War II is rather extensive, little literature calling for the repatriation of war loot, ethical contradictions of displaying such items in museums, and the legality of souvenir hunting exists. Authors are willing to call out American servicemen for the brutal practice of taking body parts and personal property, but they fall short of calling for action. Even the writer of crime in the United States military, Clifton Bryant, neglected to outright call the actions illegal despite the evidence to the contrary. The writings about the return of war trophies to Japan exists mainly in newspapers. A plethora of articles telling the stories of American veterans or their families working to return flags, even skulls, can be seen in papers across the country.

The repatriation of war souvenirs by museums can be difficult. The first step would be to take a look at NAGPRA and fashion a model after the law. In this scenario museums would take

inventory of all war souvenirs in their collections and make the information available to those in Japan, which may be government officials of prefectures or surviving family members of the Japanese war dead. As gathered from the repatriation stories from American veterans, returning flags is the easiest. Flags bear signatures and town names which makes the return process simpler. Other items, like diaries and photographs, should be easier to return as well. Not every item will be able to be repatriated. Despite the time and cost of this endeavor, it is a possible solution to a widespread problem.

Some items, like the binoculars taken by Robert Leckie, would be difficult to return due to the object's lack of personal information. However, groups like the Association for Peace and War Mourning manage to return obscure items. Cooperation with agencies like the APWM, OBON, and the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare will help along the repatriation process. It will take time and patience, but returning pieces of the Japanese war dead home is a worthwhile undertaking.

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