

# The Process of Heroizing the Holdout Japanese Soldiers in Indonesia

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the process by which holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia have become heroes since the 1980s. The majority of the holdout Japanese soldiers were young, low-ranking soldiers who were mobilized to the occupied territories of the Empire of Japan in World War II and did not return to their homeland after losing the war. Some 903 holdout Japanese soldiers participated in the Indonesian War of Independence (1945 to 1949), mainly in western Java and northern Sumatra. This paper classifies the reasons why they remained in Indonesia into 15 categories, based on the 47 cases confirmed by documents. It also points out that 324 of them wished to live there after the War of Independence, but the local government was hesitant to grant them nationality. When *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* (*Yayasan Warga Persahabatan*), a benevolent society, was established in 1979, led by some of the successful who had achieved economic prosperity through the re-entry of Japanese companies to Indonesia, they revealed that the holdout Japanese soldiers were opposed to being identified as war victims by the Japanese people over their “homecoming” to Japan, and instead represented themselves as “heroes of independence.” After tracing such backgrounds surrounding the holdout Japanese soldiers, the author examines the case of Ono Sakari, a holdout Japanese soldier who was called the “last hero,” based on description in his “battlefield diary” written during the War of Independence and the author’s interview with Ono and suggests that the reasons for the holdout Japanese soldiers for remaining behind were not uniform.

## Introduction

The year 2023 marks the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan friendship and cooperation as well as the 65th anniversary of Japan-Indonesia diplomatic relations, and the first official visit to the Republic of Indonesia by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan since 1991. The first “Imperial Diplomacy” by the Emperor and Empress of Japan since ascending the throne attracted the attention of the Japanese public, and their every move was reported by the mass media. Among them, the fact that Their Majesties met with the descendants of the holdout Japanese soldiers and offered flowers at the capital Jakarta’s National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata, where the holdout Japanese soldiers are also laid to rest, was

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particularly emphasized.<sup>1</sup> Why did the holdout Japanese soldiers, who had largely been neglected during the Emperor's visit in 1991, come to attract such attention? Hereafter, using notes, memoirs, relevant documents, documentaries, films, and oral histories of the holdout Japanese soldiers, this paper will examine the changes in the environment of the holdout Japanese soldiers over the past 30 years or so, from an intrinsic perspective based on their narratives.

### Classification of reasons for remaining

Holdout Japanese soldiers are those who were mobilized to various parts of Asia during World War II and remained there after the collapse of the Empire of Japan, and their total number is estimated to be in the 10,000s.<sup>2</sup> They are called “holdout Japanese soldiers” because many of them were young, low-ranking soldiers. In reality, however, there were military officers and military civilians as well as civilians.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons why they did not return to Japan vary greatly, from staying voluntarily to being coerced to remain. In the case of the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia, the following 47 cases were identified through documents and videos.

(a) Army Lieutenant Komatsu Takashi,<sup>4</sup> Army Lieutenant Maeda Hiroshi,<sup>5</sup> Army Sergeant

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<sup>1</sup> The author's story was featured in the June 18, 2023 society page of *the Sankei Shimbun* morning edition, “Indoneshia zanryū Nipponhei no shison: Heika ni ‘chichi no kokoro’ tsutaetai—Ryōkoku yūkō no negai, jisedai ni [Descendants of holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia: Wishing to convey ‘my father's spirit’ to the Emperor—Passing on the wish for friendship between the two countries to the next generation],” the June 21, 2023 society page of *the Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, “Ryōheika, zanryū Nipponhei nisei ra to menkai: Kunan no rekishi ni hikari keiki ni / Indoneshia—Kenkyūsha ‘kanshin takamari kitai’ [Their Majesties meet with second-generation holdout Japanese soldiers, shedding light on their history of hardships / Indonesia—Researchers ‘expect increase in interest’],” and in “Rekishi: Shirarezaru ‘zanryū Nipponhei’—Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō ni sankā [History: The unknown ‘holdout Japanese soldiers’—Their participation in the Indonesian War of Independence]” in Yomiuri TV's news program “Wake Up” broadcast on June 24, 2023. Additionally, an editorial article written by the author “Ryōheika no Indoneshia hōmon: Zanryū Nipponhei kunan no rekishi—Bidan ni kakureta jitsuzō chokushi wo [Their Majesties' visit to Indonesia: The history of hardship of the holdout Japanese soldiers—Facing the reality behind the moving tales]” was distributed by Kyodo News, and was published in the July 6, 2023 culture page of *the Tokyo Shimbun* evening edition, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Hayashi Eiichi. *Zanryū Nipponhei* [Holdout Japanese soldiers]. Chuokoron-Shinsha. 2012. pp. 32–37.

<sup>3</sup> Some researchers call them “holdout Japanese,” taking into account the civilians.

<sup>4</sup> Komatsu Takashi was born in 1922 in Oita Prefecture. He graduated from Waseda University after attending a commercial school. Following his graduation from a reserve officers' cadet school in Kurume and the Air Communication Corps, he was assigned to the 35th Anti-Aircraft Radio Squadron and was in Palembang in southern Sumatra when the war ended in defeat. Oku Genzō. *Dassō Nihonhei* [Japanese deserters]. The Mainichi Newspapers. 1980. pp. 83–95.

<sup>5</sup> Maeda Hiroshi was born in 1920 in Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture. He graduated from Osaka Pharmaceutical College and began working for Tanabe Seiyaku in 1941 but joined the 66th Central Unit the following year. After graduating from reserve officers' cadet school in Kumamoto, he was assigned to the Southern Expeditionary Army Group. He served in the 15th Independent Garrison in North Sumatra in 1943 with the 57th independent infantry battalion and was stationed in Aceh as the commander of the 1st Company of the Volunteer Army with the 25th Army Headquarters when the war ended in defeat. Maeda Hiroshi Sufian. *Sumatora, waga funbo no chi* [Sumatra, the land of my grave]. Maeda Hiroshi kun shuki kankōkai. 1986. pp. 1–59.

Ono Sakari,<sup>6</sup> Army Superior Private Miyayama Shigeo,<sup>7</sup> Navy Commissioned Officer Yoshizumi Tomegorō,<sup>8</sup> Army Commissioned Officer Ichiki Tatsuo,<sup>9</sup> Army civilian Suzuki Hideo,<sup>10</sup> and trading company employee Shirakawa Masao<sup>11</sup> wanted to “make Indonesia independent.”

(b) Army Superior Private Yoshinaga Hayao<sup>12</sup> “wanted to make a name for himself and clear the stigma of being a ‘fugitive soldier.’”

<sup>6</sup> Ono Sakari was born in 1919 in Minamifurano, Hokkaido. He joined the 28th regiment of the 7th Division. He volunteered to be a replacement personnel for the Southern Expeditionary Army Group and went to Java. He was then transferred to the 27th Independent Mixed Brigade Headquarters of the 16th Army. He was further transferred to the General Staff Department, where he was in charge of handling classified documents, etc. when the war ended in defeat. Hayashi Eiichi. *Zanryū Nipponhei no shinjitsu* [Truth about the holdout Japanese soldiers]. Sakuhinsha. 2007. pp. 34–64.

<sup>7</sup> Miyayama Shigeo was born in 1914 in Dalian and raised in Tokyo. After graduating early from Tokyo Imperial University, he joined the Imperial Guards Search Regiment. After going to Berastagi in northern Sumatra, he moved to Aceh to guard the coastline when the war ended in defeat. Kinoshita Michisuke. *Miyayama Shigeo kun den* [Biography of Miyayama Shigeo]. Private edition. 1995. pp. 2–18.

<sup>8</sup> Yoshizumi Tomegorō was born in 1911 in Yamagata Prefecture. He went to Sumatra with the help of distant relatives, but work did not go well and he returned to Japan. The following year, he went to Java and became a reporter for *the Nichi-Ran Shōgyō Shinbun* [Japan-Dutch Journal of Commerce] but returned to Japan again due to deportation. He smuggled into Bangka Island on the day the war started but was arrested and sent to Australia on a detained ship. Upon returning to Japan through detainee exchange, he led southern personnel from the navy’s Special Service Agency and landed on Celebes (present-day Sulawesi) Island. After the Special Service Agency was disbanded, he was appointed as the Chief of Section 3 of the Jakarta Naval Office when the war ended in defeat. Hayashi Eiichi. *Tōbu Jawa no Nipponjin butai* [Troops made of Japanese soldiers in East Java]. Sakuhinsha. 2009. pp. 56–85.

<sup>9</sup> Ichiki Tatsuo was born in 1906 in Kumamoto Prefecture. After working for a local bank in southern Kyushu, he went to Palembang in southern Sumatra to become a photographer. He then moved to Bandung in western Java and changed jobs before landing a job at *the Nichi-Ran Shōgyō Shinbun*. He was denied re-entry after returning to Japan temporarily, and transferred to the South Seas Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commissioned Officer of Section 6, Department 2 of the General Staff Department. He returned to Jakarta as a member of the 16th Army Propaganda Team when the war began and was commissioned as an officer for the Translation Office (later, Leadership) of PETA (*Pembela Tanah Air*, Defenders of the Fatherland) when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Tōbu Jawa no Nipponjin butai* [Troops made of Japanese soldiers in East Java]. pp. 92–113.

<sup>10</sup> Suzuki Hideo was born in 1916 in Akita Prefecture. The war ended in defeat while he was working as an army civilian at the North Sumatra Fuel Arsenal. Hayashi Eiichi. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. Shinyosha. 2023. p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> Shirakawa Masao (real name: Konno Hisashi) was born in 1923 in Lüshun. He became an army special apprentice officer, but was discharged locally due to paralysis from a torpedo attack by a submarine on the ship transporting him to the south. He later was employed locally by the Singapore branch of a Japanese trading company and was transferred to the Medan office where he faced defeat one week later. Honda Tadahisa. *Paran to bakuyaku* [Parang and explosives]. Nishida Shoten. 1990. pp. 5–7.

<sup>12</sup> Yoshinaga Hayao was born in 1920 in Kochi Prefecture. He went to the mainland as a member of the Special Advance Team of the Youth Volunteer Corps for Manchuria-Mongolia. He was called into the 44th Infantry Regiment and assigned to the Southern Territory Support Unit of the Kwantung Army. He then moved to Cimahi in Bandung in western Java and was digging holes in the mountains in the 27th Independent Mixed Brigade Artillery when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. p. 27.

- (c) Army Captain Inoue Tetsurō<sup>13</sup> had “a wife and children” there.
- (d) Army Second Lieutenant Otsuto Noboru,<sup>14</sup> Army Superior Private Narita Genshirō,<sup>15</sup> Army First Class Private Hirooka Isamu,<sup>16</sup> and Tanaka Yukitoshi,<sup>17</sup> Commissioned Officer of the Southern Territory Scrap Metal Control Association “thought it was better to remain than return to Japan.”
- (e) Navy Chief Warrant Officer Chiyomori Michiharu<sup>18</sup> “sought a place to die.”

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<sup>13</sup> Inoue Tetsurō was born in 1903 in Fukuoka Prefecture. After graduating from Hokkaido Imperial University’s Faculty of Agriculture, he enlisted in the 12th Cavalry Regiment of the 12th Division in Kokura and became an army lieutenant. He then went to Brazil to establish a farmer’s *dojo* to develop agricultural leaders. Returning to Japan after moving from one place to another in South America, he worked at a textile equipment manufacturing factory in Osaka before running a farm in Aichi in failure. He was drafted into a cavalry regiment and experienced front-line combat in Shanghai and Hangzhou. He then went to southern China and served in the Divisional General Staff Department in Guangdong. He was involved in political maneuvering in the local Special Service Agency. After entering Singapore as a member of the Yamashita Corps headquarters, he transferred to eastern Sumatra as military administration personnel and served as the general-affairs manager of Sumatra East Coast Province, then as secretary to the governor, police chief, and assistant-resident. He was later appointed to the governor and then to director of a farmer training institute. At the time the war ended in defeat, he was mobilizing the Indonesians to organize a nation-founding volunteer corps to prevent the Allied Forces from landing. Hayashi Eiichi. *Indonesia zanryū Nipponhei no shakaishiteki kenkyū 1942–2014* [Research on the social history of the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia: 1942–2014]. Doctoral dissertation, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University. 2016. pp. 103–112.

<sup>14</sup> Otsuto Noboru was born in 1918 in Tokyo. After graduating from the Specialty Division Commercial Course, Waseda University, he joined Showa Aircraft Industry. He enlisted in the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards and went to Medan in northern Sumatra. When the war ended in defeat, he was guarding the west coast of Sumatra as a machine gun platoon leader. Ibid. *Dassō Nihonhei* [Japanese deserters]. pp. 111–120.

<sup>15</sup> Narita Genshirō was born in 1918 in Aomori Prefecture. He joined the 5th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards and went to Sumatra, which is where he was when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> Hirooka Isamu was born in 1921 in Oshima, Yamaguchi Prefecture. He relied on his brother who ran an iron factory in Java, and took over the factory after his death, but returned to Japan due to the worsening relationship between Japan and the Netherlands. He later went to Jakarta as a commissioned officer for the Java Military Administrator’s Department and joined the 20th Field Air Repair Depot in Bandung as a local conscript, his position when the war ended in defeat. Hayashi Eiichi. “Ran-In hikiagesha no raifu hisutori [Life History of Dutch India Repatriates].” In *Ajia yūgaku: Teikoku hōkai to hito no sai-idō* [Asian studies: Collapse of the empire and the re-migration of people] No. 145, edited by Araragi Shinzo. Bensei Publishing. September 2011. pp. 150–157.

<sup>17</sup> Tanaka Yukitoshi was born in 1907 in Hokkaido and raised in Tokyo. He was employed at the Osaka branch of Arima Yōkō, which had its headquarters in Java. He went to Bandung in western Java as a Commissioned Officer of the Southern Territory Scrap Metal Control Association, which was set up by the Vital Commodities Corporation’s War Preparation Division. The war ended in defeat while he was there. Oku Genzō. *Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō wo ikinuite* [Surviving the Indonesian War of Independence]. Sanshintoshō. 1987. pp. 120–122.

<sup>18</sup> Chiyomori Michiharu was born in 1917 in Kagoshima Prefecture. He volunteered for the navy and joined the marines in Sasebo. He later became a crew member of the Shōnan Maru No. 17, a patrol boat converted from a small whaling ship. He was attacked by U.S. aircraft off the coast of Ambon Island and thrown overboard, and was hospitalized in Java when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. p. 58.

- (f) Army Sergeant Taira Teizō<sup>19</sup> was solicited by an Indonesian who said he would be “treated as an officer and given a house and a woman.”
- (g) Army Second Lieutenant Koga Masayoshi<sup>20</sup> and Army Corporal Nakamura Tsunegorō<sup>21</sup> “grew tired of the military.”
- (h) Kempei (military police) civilian Iwamoto Tomio,<sup>22</sup> Army employee Kumazaki Shōzō,<sup>23</sup> and Navy civilian Ueda Kaneo<sup>24</sup> “did not want to be a prisoner of war.”
- (i) Army Paymaster Sergeant Yamanashi Shigeru,<sup>25</sup> Army Corporal Fujiyama Hideo,<sup>26</sup> Army

<sup>19</sup> Taira Teizō was born in 1920 on Miyako-jima, Okinawa Prefecture. After working at various small town factories in Osaka, he was invited by his younger brother to work at a sake factory in Taipei. Later, he was assigned to the 1st Infantry Regiment in Taiwan and went to Manila, Philippines, Tarakan Island in northeastern Borneo (present-day Kalimantan), and then to guard Palembang, Sumatra. The war ended in defeat while he was stationed on Sumbawa Island. Sakano Narutaka. *Samurai, Bari ni junzu* [Samurai, martyred in Bali]. Kodansha. 2008. pp. 16–35, 46–59.

<sup>20</sup> Koga Masayoshi was born in 1920 in Tokyo. After graduating from Meiji University's Specialty Division, he enlisted in the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards. He was sent to northern Sumatra and assigned to a machine gun company, and was positioned on the coast in Langsa when the war ended in defeat. Murakami Hyōe. *Ajia ni makareta tane* [Seeds sown in Asia]. Bungeishunju. 1988. pp. 101–123.

<sup>21</sup> Nakamura Tsunegorō was born in 1924 in Tokyo. The war ended in defeat while he was serving as a detachment leader of the 6th Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Regiment of the Imperial Guard in Aceh, Sumatra. Aonuma Yōichirō. *Kikan sezu* [No return]. 2014. Shogakukan (paperback). pp. 242–245.

<sup>22</sup> Iwamoto Tomio was born in 1917 in Kagoshima Prefecture. After working as a peasant, he went to Manchuria and became a military civilian for the Kempei Training Corps. He was then transferred to the 3rd Field Kempeitai (military police) and was in Java when the war ended in defeat. Fukushi Tomo no Kai (Yayasan Warga Persahabatan, a foundation that unites Japanese descendants in Indonesia). *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. May 1985. pp. 1–4.

<sup>23</sup> Kumazaki Shōzō was born in 1918 in Gifu Prefecture. He was in the 7th Company of the Air Brigade Headquarters when the war ended in defeat. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. August 1986. pp. 1–4; *Geppo*. September 1986. pp. 1–3.

<sup>24</sup> Ueda Kaneo was born in 1915 in Okayama Prefecture. Having worked as a taxi driver in Kobe, he was recruited as an automobile technician in the Kure Naval Munitions Department and went to Davao, Philippines to drive trucks. Later, he moved to Surabaya and worked as a driver for the South-West Area Fleet Headquarters, and then was an automobile delivery section chief for the 2nd Southern Expeditionary Fleet Headquarters in Bandung when the war ended in defeat. Chō Yōhiro. *Ronsō Nonfikushon 12: Kaeranakatta Nipponhei (Zōho kaitei-ban)* [Ronso Nonfiction 12: Japanese soldiers who did not return home (Expanded and revised edition)]. Ronsosha. 2021. pp. 182–188.

<sup>25</sup> Yamanashi Shigeru was born in 1920 in Tokyo. After graduating from Chuo University, he worked for Mitsui Trust. He then joined the 3rd Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards. He was dispatched to Manchuria. He was stationed in Berastagi, a summer resort in Sumatra, and was assigned to procurement of supplies when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō wo ikinuite* [Surviving the Indonesian War of Independence]. pp. 105–108.

<sup>26</sup> Fujiyama Hideo was born in 1922 in Saga Prefecture. After working as an electrician at a coal mine power plant, at Yahata Steel Works, and at Sasebo Heavy Industries' airplane factory, he volunteered for the Japanese Army and fought for two years in various parts of Burma, but was wounded in combat and transferred to Solo, central Java. He was then transferred to Malang in eastern Java and then to Gorda Airport in Banten Province in western Java, serving as a weekly noncommissioned officer in the maintenance group of the 35th Training Squadron at the time Japan was defeated in the war. Hayashi Eiichi. *Kōgun heishi to Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō* [Soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army and the Indonesian War of Independence]. Yoshikawakobunkan. 2011. pp. 18–44.

Lance Corporal Ikegami Naruto,<sup>27</sup> Army Lance Corporal Motobō Takatoshi,<sup>28</sup> Army Corporal Takasu Shigeo,<sup>29</sup> Army Superior Private Akaiwa Hideyoshi,<sup>30</sup> and Army civilian Tachikawa Shōzō<sup>31</sup> “believed groundless rumors.”

(j) Army Lance Corporal Shida Yasuo<sup>32</sup> struck a superior officer and “feared detention.”

(k) Army Second Lieutenant Itami Hideo<sup>33</sup> felt “responsible for handing weapons” to Indonesian soldiers. Kempei Corporal Tsutsumi Kiyokatsu<sup>34</sup> “tried to persuade the people of Aceh to avoid confrontation over weapons.”

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<sup>27</sup> Ikegami Naruto was born in 1919 in Kagoshima Prefecture and raised in Korea. He transferred from the preparatory course at Meiji University to Nihon University’s College of Economics. After graduating early, he joined the 45th Regiment Replacement Depot in Kagoshima. He served in Burma before being sent to Seram Island, Indonesia by the Airport Security Battalion. He was in the Independent Battalion in Magelang, central Java, when the war ended in defeat. Oku Genzō. *Kaeranakatta Nipponhei* [Japanese soldiers who did not return home]. Seikaoraisha. 1987. pp. 29–31, 63–78.

<sup>28</sup> Motobō Takatoshi was born in 1920 in Miyazaki Prefecture. After serving in the Kwantung Army, the war ended in defeat while he was in Cimahi, near Bandung. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. May 1987. pp. 1–3.

<sup>29</sup> Takasu Shigeo was born in 1924 in Kanagawa Prefecture. While working as a temporary clerk at the first-class post office in front of Yokohama Station, he volunteered for the army and enlisted in the 5th Regiment of the Imperial Guard, Depot Division, East 8th Unit. Later, he was sent as a replacement soldier to Medan, Sumatra where the main unit was located. The war ended in defeat while he was there. Ibid. *Kikan sezu* [No return]. pp. 337–355.

<sup>30</sup> Akaiwa Hideyoshi was born in 1921 in Kagoshima Prefecture. He was called up as a mechanic in the Army Air Corps and was in Sumatra when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Tachikawa Shōzō was born in 1918 in Tochigi Prefecture. After his honorable discharge in Sumatra, he was working as a military civilian in the Training Section of the Military Administration Department in the east coast province of Medan when the war ended in defeat. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. September 1985. pp. 1–3.

<sup>32</sup> Shida Yasuo was born in 1921 in Miyazaki Prefecture. He joined the West 99th Unit in Kumamoto. He was then transferred to Burma, where he drove trucks as a mechanic, moving from place to place. He was then transferred to the 34th Training Squadron in Java, where he was when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Dassō Nihonhei* [Japanese deserters]. pp. 15–29.

<sup>33</sup> Itami Hideo was born in 1923 in Osaka. He was called up while working at an ironworks, and went to Aceh, Sumatra after training with the 3rd Air Army Training Corps. He belonged to a airborne battalion and was leading local volunteer troops to guard the area around the airfield when the war ended in defeat. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *YWP dayori* [YWP newsletter]. June 1980. pp. 8–9; *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. June 1989. pp. 1–4.

<sup>34</sup> Tsutsumi Kiyokatsu was born in 1919 in Hokkaido. He joined the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards and was wounded while participating in the Malay Operation. He returned after the Singapore Operation, going to northern Sumatra. Later, after serving in the Kempei Training Corps of the Southern Expeditionary Army Group in Kuala Lumpur, he was sent to Kutaraja, the capital of Aceh Province, as a corporal in the 25th Army Kempei, and was studying at the Kempeitai headquarters in Bukittinggi as a Malay language specialist when the war ended in defeat. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. February 1990. pp. 1–6; *Geppo*. January 1991. pp. 1–4.

- (l) Army Warrant Officer Kioka Naoyuki,<sup>35</sup> Kempei Sergeant Major Onodera Tadao,<sup>36</sup> Kempei Sergeant Major Sugiyama Nagamoto,<sup>37</sup> Kempei Sergeant Tanaka Toshio,<sup>38</sup> Kempei Sergeant Hasegawa Toyoki,<sup>39</sup> and Army civilian Kage Hitoshi<sup>40</sup> “feared becoming war criminals.”

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<sup>35</sup> Kioka Naoyuki was born in 1917 in Kagawa Prefecture. He joined the 5th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guards and was in Sumatra after serving in Manchuria and the southern front when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Zanryū heishi no gunzō* [Groups of soldiers who stayed behind]. p. 64.

<sup>36</sup> Onodera Tadao was born in 1916 in Iwate Prefecture. After working at a silk mill in Sendai, he joined the Independent Garrison of the Kwantung Army. He then passed the non-commissioned officer examination and the kempei examination. He was assigned to the headquarters of the Sun Wu Kempeitai and participated in the Nomonhan Incident. After transferring to the 2nd Field Army, he was transferred to the 16th Army and went to Java. He was chief of the Jakarta Pier Kempei Detachment Special Higher Police when the war ended in defeat. Onodera Tadao (edited by Sasaki Taka). *Ojiisan wa Nipponjin datta* [Grandfather was Japanese]. Private edition. 1990. pp. 21–36.

<sup>37</sup> Sugiyama Nagamoto was born in 1918 in Niigata Prefecture. He enlisted in the 16th Infantry Regiment of Shibata and was on guard duty at the Soviet-Manchurian border when he passed the kempei examination. He was assigned to the border area between South Manchuria and Korea. He participated in the Dutch East Indies Operation and landed in Rembang in central Java, and was stationed in Malang. Later, he was transferred to Jakarta, where he was preparing for a guerilla warfare in anticipation of the Allied Forces landing when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Tōbu Jawa no Nipponjin butai* [Troops made of Japanese soldiers in East Java]. pp. 117–131.

<sup>38</sup> Tanaka Toshio was born in 1917 in Fukuoka Prefecture. After working as a craftsman at Yahata Steel Works, he joined the 3rd Railway Regiment in Harbin, Manchuria. He volunteered to become a kempei there and was sent to the Mukden Kempeitai. Later, he was transferred to the 3rd Field Kempeitai and participated in the 16th Army's Java Operation. Later, he was sent to the Semarang Kempei Detachment in central Java, where he was in charge of Indonesians in the Special Higher Police Unit when the war ended in defeat. Tochikubo Hiroo. *Nikkei Indonesia jin* [Japanese-Indonesians]. Simul Shuppan-kai. 1979. pp. 3–119.

<sup>39</sup> Hasegawa Toyoki was born in 1917 in Fukushima Prefecture. After enlisting in Ranam, Korea, he volunteered to become a kempei. He participated in the Malay Operation and traveled through Singapore and Penang to Sumatra, and worked in the General Affairs Section of the Kempeitai headquarters in Bukittinggi. The war ended in defeat while he was on special dispatch for the Medan Detachment. Hasegawa Toyoki. *Sumatora mushuku* [Homeless in Sumatra]. Soubunsha. 1982. pp. 9–88.

<sup>40</sup> Kage Hitoshi was born in 1913 in Fukuoka Prefecture. He applied for a position with the Southern Territory Military Administration of the Army Ministry and worked in the Enemy Property Management Section of the Medan Military Administration Department, where he was assigned to manage the property of prisoners of war when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Dassō Nihonhei* [Japanese deserters]. pp. 57–69.

- (m) Navy civilian Isomura Seitoku,<sup>41</sup> Army civilian Chō Juntatsu,<sup>42</sup> and Miyahara Eiji<sup>43</sup> were Taiwanese Japanese soldiers and “feared persecution in Taiwan, which became part of the Republic of China.”
- (n) Technical Captain Murakami Junjirō<sup>44</sup> was “left behind” at the Army hospital where he was admitted for mental illness.
- (o) Army Paymaster Warrant Officer Ishii Masaharu,<sup>45</sup> Army Corporal Doki Tokiji,<sup>46</sup> Army Sergeant Hayakawa Kiyoshi,<sup>47</sup> Army Engineer Corps Sergeant Higuchi Osamu,<sup>48</sup> Army Second Class Private Nanri Isamu,<sup>49</sup> and Army First Class Private Shimooka Zenji<sup>50</sup> were “abducted and confined” by Indonesians.

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<sup>41</sup> Taiwanese Isomura Seitoku (real name: Kē Shēngdé) was born in 1921. He volunteered at the Takunan Industrial Warriors Training Center of the Imperial Subjects' Public Service Association. He changed his surname to a Japanese name and became a military civilian at the 101st Naval Fuel Depot and went to the northwestern part of New Guinea. Later, he was transferred to the 104th Naval Facility Squadron in Borneo, where he was when the war ended in defeat. Isomura Seitoku. *Ware ni kaeru sokoku naku* [No motherland to return to]. Jiji Press. 1981. pp. 3–162.

<sup>42</sup> Taiwanese Chō Juntatsu was born in 1922. He was assigned to the 25th Army Headquarters, Unit *Tomi* 8991, in Bukittinggi, Sumatra. The war ended in defeat while he was on a business trip to Palembang. Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. August 1988. pp. 1–3.

<sup>43</sup> Taiwanese Miyahara Eiji (real name ǃ Bóqīng) was born in 1922. He served at the Chinese front as an interpreter for the Japanese Army. He then went to the Philippines and landed in Java as a member of the 48th Division. Returning to Taiwan, he assisted in research on malaria at the Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department, Southern Territory Personnel Training Center, Taihoku Imperial University. Later, he was assigned to the Unit *Oka* 9420, an Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Unit under the direct control of the Southern Expeditionary Army Group, and moved to Singapore. There, he saw the exclusion of Chinese and left the Army, fleeing to Indonesia when the war ended in defeat. Kamisaka Fuyuko. *Minami no sokoku ni ikite* [Living in the Southern Homeland]. Bungeishunju. 1997. pp. 24–25.

<sup>44</sup> Murakami Junjirō was born in 1918 in Wakayama Prefecture. The war ended in defeat while he was hospitalized in Padang, Sumatra. Mitome Tadao. *Bōkyō* [Nostalgia] reprinted edition in 2005. pp. 101–103.

<sup>45</sup> Ishii Masaharu was born in 1916 in Hokkaido. After enlisting in the Imperial Guards Cavalry Regiment, he was transferred to the Accounting Department and went to Aceh in Sumatra, and was in the merchant port of Meulaboh on the west coast of Sumatra when the war ended in defeat. Ishii Masaharu. *Minami kara* [From the South]. Nishida Shoten. 1984. pp. 9–135.

<sup>46</sup> Doki Tokiji was born in 1910 in Ishikawa Prefecture. He worked for Daishōjigawa Suiden Gaisha. He then joined the 1st Telegraph Regiment in Sagami-hara, Kanagawa Prefecture, participated in the Malay Operation, traveled to Palembang, Sumatra, and was stationed in Lahat, where he was preparing to set up a communications station, when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Kaeranakatta Nipponhei (Zōho kaitei-ban)* [Japanese soldiers who did not return home (Expanded and revised edition)]. pp. 117–127.

<sup>47</sup> Hayakawa Kiyoshi was born in 1915 in Gunma Prefecture. The war ended in defeat while he was in Sumatra. Hayakawa Kiyoshi. *Indonesia dokuritsu senki: Batakaro Gerira* [Chronicle of the Indonesian War of Independence: Batak Karo guerrilla]. Tokyo Bungeisha. 1987. pp. 2–3.

<sup>48</sup> Higuchi Osamu was born in 1919 in Gunma Prefecture. He was in Aceh, Sumatra, when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Indonesia dokuritsu sensō wo ikinuite* [Surviving the Indonesian War of Independence]. pp. 49–55.

<sup>49</sup> Nanri Isamu was born in 1924 in Chinnamp'o, Korea and raised in Saga Prefecture. He was in Medan, Sumatra, when the war ended in defeat. Ibid. *Kaeranakatta Nipponhei (Zōho kaitei-ban)* [Japanese soldiers who did not return home (Expanded and revised edition)]. pp. 239–243.

<sup>50</sup> Shimooka Zenji was born in 1926 in Kyoto. Three months after switching from military civilian to soldier, the war ended in defeat while he was in western Java. Ibid. *Kikan sezu* [No return]. pp. 321–329.

Of these, (a) through (e) were highly voluntary, (n) and (o) were forced, and (f) through (m) fell somewhere between the two. Although the individual reasons must have been complicated and compounded, and are not easy to categorize, it is certain that the holdout Japanese soldiers themselves remembered the past as described above and were represented by the people concerned.

### **Response by the Indonesian government**

With the declaration of independence on August 17, 1945, a republic-type government was established in Indonesia. Nevertheless, in the ensuing month, British troops advanced into Indonesia on behalf of the Allies, triggering armed conflicts in various locations. These conflicts culminated in a War of Independence. What the Indonesian side sought at that time were the weapons and human resources of the remaining Japanese forces. This resulted in 903<sup>51</sup> holdout Japanese soldiers, mainly in western Java and northern Sumatra.

They were involved in the War of Independence by providing military training to the Indonesian army and village youth, repairing and modifying weapons from the Japanese military, and serving on the front lines of the guerrilla war.

On the other hand, being an informal presence, the holdout Japanese soldiers found themselves in a predicament, having to go into hiding during the truce negotiations with the Dutch and being forced out of their units during the reorganization and rationalization of the new republic's army. Even after the Indonesian War of Independence, the republic's government forced the holdout Japanese soldiers in Aceh in northern Sumatra to move,<sup>52</sup> fearing they would become tied to rebel groups. Furthermore, the Indonesian government passed a cabinet decision in March 1953 requesting all holdout Japanese soldiers to leave, and the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Pacific Department lodged a request<sup>53</sup> with the Consulate-General of Japan, which indicated that the soldiers were not welcomed with open arms by Indonesia as a nation.

A majority of the 324,<sup>54</sup> excluding the 45 who temporarily returned to Japan after the War of Independence, were discharged from the Indonesian army and blended into local communities through "rites of passage" such as marrying local women and converting to Islam. However, their status was insecure, being separated from the military in exchange for a simple certificate. Since Indonesia's Ministry of Justice made a move to deport those who did not have local citizenship as "illegal immigrants," many of the holdout Japanese soldiers applied for Indonesian citizenship to the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs in 1957, and were issued provisional ID cards and became "associate Indonesians," but only a few were able to obtain the nationality determination certificates that were issued several times between 1961 and the following year, leaving many without citizenship recognition. The March 4, 1958 edition of the Indonesian-language newspaper *Tempo* reported that "more than 350 holdout Japanese soldiers hope to obtain Indonesian citizenship (naturalization) when the peace agreement between Japan and Indonesia takes effect." The issue of the nationality of the holdout Japanese soldiers was subsequently solved when all re-

<sup>51</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai, ed. *Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō ni sankā shita "Kaeranakatta Nipponhei" issen-meī no koe* [Voices of 1,000 Japanese soldiers who participated in the Indonesian War of Independence and did not return home] (Privately printed book). 2005. p. 382.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* *Tōbu Jawa no Nipponjin butai* [Troops made of Japanese soldiers in East Java]. pp. 290–291.

<sup>53</sup> Goto Kenichi. "Zanryū Nipponhei no sengoshi: Kunpuru Otsudo no ashiato [Postwar journal of a holdout Japanese soldier: Footsteps of Kumpul Otsudo]." In *Tōnan ajia kara mita kingendai Nippon* [Modern Japan from the perspective of Southeast Asia]. Chapter 8. Iwanami Shoten. 2012. pp. 255–259.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* *Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō ni sankā shita "Kaeranakatta Nipponhei" issen-meī no koe* [Voices of 1,000 Japanese soldiers who participated in the Indonesian War of Independence and did not return home]. p. 382.

applicants were granted nationality under the special presidential exception in 1963.<sup>55</sup> However, the fact that they could not obtain nationality for nearly 17 years meant that, for the holdout Japanese soldiers, Indonesia's independence was not synonymous with their own success.

## Organization

Rather, what proved to be a turning point in their lives was the presence of Japanese companies that were looking to re-enter Indonesia. Led by the “successful” who had achieved economic uplift through being employed locally by Japanese companies due to the growing demand for trade between the two countries until the diplomatic relations between Japan and Indonesia were restored in 1958, a friendship and benevolent society called *Fukushi Tomo no Kai (Yayasan Warga Persahabatan)* was formed in Jakarta in 1979. The existence of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* served as an opportunity to change the situation surrounding the holdout Japanese soldiers.

On December 3, 1981, the Osaka evening edition of *the Yomiuri Shimbun* listed 583 deceased or unaccounted for, and 172 survivors of the holdout Japanese soldiers under the headline, “List of former Japanese soldiers who participated in the Indonesian War of Independence completed.” The article said, “The number of those deceased or unaccounted for during the War of Independence was 226 killed in action, 238 missing, and 119 deceased after independence. There were many who were known only by their surnames, such as ‘Suzuki,’ ‘Kawada,’ and ‘Osaki,’ or by their local names, such as ‘Usman,’ ‘Simin,’ and ‘Suroto.’ There were also those who remained known only by their nicknames such as ‘Akachin.’ These were people who were afraid of being identified as war criminals or fugitives and decided to live as locals (...) Although many of the deceased were buried in heroes cemeteries, it is believed that many of those killed or missing in action were left to perish in the fields or were buried without any known surviving relatives.”

In May of the following year, *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*, a sister organization of the Japan-Indonesia Friendship Group Council, was formed at the Kensei Kinen Kaikan in Nagatacho, Tokyo. Inamine Ichiro, then chair of the Japan-Indonesia Friendship Group Council, was a member of the House of Councilors from Okinawa who had served in the Jakarta Naval Office during the war. He was also chair of the Japan-Indonesia Parliamentary Friendship League, which was inaugurated in March. Taniguchi Shigeki, Executive Director of the Japan-Indonesia Friendship Council, also served as both the Secretary General of the Japan-Indonesia Parliamentary Friendship League and Executive Director of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*. *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai* played the role of bringing the holdout Japanese soldiers closer to the comrades' associations in Japan as well as to politics.

## “Homecoming”

In response to the “homecoming” of the holdout Japanese soldiers, which *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai* set as its objective, 10 holdout Japanese soldiers were able to return to Japan temporarily in October 1982 and June of the following year under the Ministry of Health and Welfare's special support measures for unrepatriated persons. Osaka Asahi Broadcasting Corporation's program “Big News Show: Holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia meet their relatives after 37 years” (broadcast on August 20, 1982) and “Japindo II: Holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia 1982” (broadcast in November 1982, awarded the 20th Galaxy Award Grand Prize by the Association of Broadcast Critics, the Excellence Award in the TV Documentary Division of the 37th ACA National Arts Festival, and Encouragement Prize of the ABU [Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union] Prize), which covered this closely and portrayed old holdout Japanese soldiers struggling with nostalgia, reminded the Japanese people of “abandoned people” deserted

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. *Kōgun heishi to Indonnesia dokuritsu sensō* [Soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army and the Indonesian War of Independence]. pp. 134–139.

by their motherland, and touched their hearts. Japan had become a major economy at the time, and self-affirming theories of Japanese culture and the Japanese people were popular, thus many viewers may have viewed the holdout Japanese soldiers struggling in “impoverished” Indonesia as “pitiful.”

However, there was opposition to this from within *Fukushi Tomo no Kai*, which fully cooperated with the interview. *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* initially prepared and submitted a list of interview subjects based on the TV station’s request to feature holdout Japanese soldiers who had never returned to Japan after the war and were at that time suffering from poverty and illness. However, *Fukushi Tomo no Kai*’s Deputy Director Tanaka Toshio, who watched the program, leveled the criticism that “claiming that the ‘war is to blame’ without making efforts to have the holdout Japanese soldiers themselves, who left their wives and children in Japan to go to war and who fled of their own will without fulfilling their responsibilities as husbands (fathers) after the defeat, and who also gave up Japanese citizenship, explain the reasons for their flight and convince the audience, is a sales pitch on the part of the interviewers. I believe that ‘these were consequences of their own actions, and not the responsibility of war.’”<sup>56</sup> He asked Mr. Okihara, Executive Director of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*, who visited Jakarta in March 1983, that “TV and other mass media coverage should be selected based on the impact on the members, and any coverage that would damage the image of the members should be rejected for the sake of their honor. It should be noted when dealing with them that the members are not Japanese but Indonesian nationals.”<sup>57</sup>

Due in part to these developments, the “homecoming” did not attract as many applicants as expected and ended after only two rounds. Ishii Masaharu, Chief Director of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai*, who had promoted the “homecoming,” expressed his regret at the time, saying, “It was selfish of us to abandon our hometowns and our country, but the people back home never thought of us as such. The parents, siblings, wives, and children must have been longing to see us and were waiting for us to come home one day. Even if their nationality is different and family registers deleted, the connection between them cannot be cut. When will they return? What should they say to neighbors who ask? With the passage of time, there may be no one left to ask questions, but what could be said against stories spreading in the background that they cannot return home because they are fugitives? I can only imagine how uncomfortable and vexing the people of our hometowns must have felt each time, not knowing the reason why we stayed behind. I wonder if the unrepatriated brothers have ever thought about their feelings.”<sup>58</sup> Ishii ran a *konnyaku* and sandal company, and was one of the most successful.

### Self-representation as “heroes of independence”

After the “homecoming” efforts stalled, Ishii turned his attention to requesting a military pension from the Japanese government, which was also one of the objectives of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*. He was told by Taniguchi Shigeki, Executive Director of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*, that it had been recognized in Japan that the holdout Japanese soldiers were aware of their legal status and were prepared to give up their pension and other welfare benefits, but the temporary homecoming brought attention to the new fact that they had remained in a state of confusion. However, since there was still a big gap between the understanding of those who remained and the people in Japan, Taniguchi advised Ishii that first of all, “it is necessary to emphasize the explanation that, at the time, the Japanese soldiers participated in the Indonesian War of Independence out of genuine intentions in a climate that valued trust with Indonesia and

<sup>56</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. October 1982. p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. April 1983. p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. January 1983. p. 2.

supported independence.”<sup>59</sup> Ishii then proposed to the members of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* that he intended to carry out “awareness-raising activities” focusing on Liberal Democratic Party politicians, as soon as materials explaining this were available. Ishii believed that the greatest “memorial” for the more than 400 victims of the Indonesian War of Independence would be to document the role of those who remained behind in the history of the founding of Indonesia, and that “the most meaningful work” for *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* would be to have this information recorded in Japan and translated into Indonesian. As if to make good on his promise, he planned to publish his autobiography and called on members to write or tape-record their own memoirs.<sup>60</sup>

On this, some said, “Indonesia, as an independent country, would not like to say that it became independent with assistance from foreigners, and worse, would not like to write it down as a historical fact and leave it for later generations (...) They might think without saying, ‘Why do they have to submit it to the Japanese cooperative association now, and speak as if they participated in the War of Independence as Japanese and provided assistance?’ If that were to happen, it would be another odd relationship.”<sup>61</sup> In recording the historical facts of the fight for independence, Ishii stated that “it is safe to announce that we proudly picked up our guns and fought as Japanese,” and expressed his strong concern that although the Indonesian public equally recognized the existence of “holdouts” at the time of independence, more than 40 years have passed since then, and with public memory fading and impatience growing, the more than 400 victims who were killed will be buried forever in the darkness of history if their names are not recorded as historical facts now.<sup>62</sup>

Later, the issue of recording of history was settled by *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* itself keeping a collection of records rather than taking advantage of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai Kyoryoku Kai*.<sup>63</sup> Otsuto, the editor of *Geppo* (monthly bulletin), who intended to keep a record of life rather than war experiences, often called for contributions of articles about life after the war, but naturally the contributions tended to be war stories, and *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* members shared each other’s memories of the war by reading the memoirs of the War of Independence published in *Geppo*. As a result, *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* shifted from a mutual support group to a community of memory tied to the experience of the War of Independence, transforming itself into a “comrades’ association.” However, while Japan’s comrades’ associations were formed by people who had served in the same unit during World War II and shared the same experiences, the people who gathered at *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* meetings were from different backgrounds and belonged to different units, and had different circumstances that led them to stay behind. That proved to be a setback, and in the end, *Fukushi Tomo no Kai*’s collection of records of the War of Independence was never published.

### **Representation on the Japanese side and “restoration of honor”**

Even so, the significance of self-representation as “heroes of independence” by the holdout Japanese soldiers themselves in the 1980s as an opposition to the perception in postwar Japan, which viewed them as victims of the war, was not small.

For example, in Kagoshima Television’s “No return: Postwar for the Japanese soldiers who remained in Indonesia” (broadcast on May 31, 1994), Chiyomori Michiharu said, “We must liberate the people of Greater East Asia, this is a fight for national liberation. We accepted what our superiors told us and set out in high spirits. However, nearly 50 years after the end of the

<sup>59</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. April 1983. p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. April 1983. p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. May 1983. p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. August 1983. p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Fukushi Tomo no Kai. *Geppo* [Monthly bulletin]. January 1986. pp. 5–6.

Greater East Asia War, we are now hearing for the first time that Japan engaged in a war of invasion, and it is truly shameful. That is not the way we felt when we went to war.” The program also showed a *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* executive stating, “The amount of money was not the issue when we insisted on a pension. Rather, it was the significance of the fact that the image of the soldiers as fugitives and deserters has been cleared and that the government recognized them as holdout soldiers,” indicating that they viewed the Japanese government’s granting of temporary soldier’s pension to 21 survivors in 1991 as a “restoration of honor” from being labeled as “fugitives” and “deserters.”

Additionally, in the documentary video “The Light of Independent Asia: History and the Present of Southeast Asia”<sup>64</sup> (1995), organized by the National Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the End of the War, the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata is shown with the following statement: “It is said that after the defeat of Japan, there were about 2,000 Japanese soldiers who remained in Indonesia and fought in the War of Independence. (...) The Japanese who gave their lives in the War of Independence are now respectfully honored in this cemetery as heroes of independent Indonesia. Ono Sakari, who was wounded fighting against the Dutch forces, was one of them.” Ono then appears and says, “When the war started, many people who wanted to get support from the Japanese army came to us, from the Indonesian side. I was also persuaded and joined in Indonesia. (How many people were killed in the war?) About half. At least 1,000 were killed in the war. That is because we provided guidance in the war and were on the front lines. We were easily detected by the enemy. That is why there were so many casualties in the end,” explaining the sacrificial contribution made. In 1995, the year this documentary was released, the Japanese government awarded certificates of commendation to 69 holdout Japanese soldiers in the name of the Japanese ambassador to Indonesia.

Furthermore, Yamaguchi Broadcasting’s “NNN Document 96: Japanese soldiers who did not return home—Current situation of the soldiers who remained in Indonesia” (broadcast on January 29, 1996, winner of the Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association Award [44th Award for Excellence, News Programs Division]), while focusing on the difficult retired lives of Doki Tokiji, the main character in “Japindo II and III,” and Kioka Naoyuki, also mentioned that there were people like Fujiyama Hideo, who “never doubted the liberation of the Asian colonies.” The program quoted Fujiyama’s statement, “We are going to decolonize ourselves from the colonies, they said. We felt their enthusiasm. Why did we fight the war? The Japanese army said they would bring independence. So why not support that?”

Thus, in the documentaries produced in the 1990s, representations of the holdout Japanese soldiers were no longer focused solely on the image of “abandoned people,” but rather reflect the voices of those who remained voluntarily, such as Chiyomori Michiharu, Ono Sakari, and Fujiyama Hideo. This may be due to the fact that the number of survivors was decreasing as the holdout Japanese soldiers aged and the interviewee became more diverse. As a result, however, the previously dominant image of holdout Japanese soldiers as victims of the war was revised.

### “Commendation” by the Japanese government

During this period, the Japanese government, which granted a temporary soldier’s pension and presented ambassador’s awards to the holdout Japanese soldiers, presented the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Fifth Class, to four, and the Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays (Sixth Class), to one of the executives of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* from 1991 to 1996, promoting their “commendation.”

<sup>64</sup> Preceding studies have described “The Light of Independent Asia” as “work based on a typical ‘liberation view of history.’” Goto Kenichi. “‘Kaihō sensō’ shikan/‘dokuritsu kōken’ shikan no kyomōsei [Deceptiveness of ‘liberation war’ and ‘contribution to independence’ views of history].” In *ibid.* *Tōnan ajia kara mita kingendai Nippon* [Modern Japan from the perspective of Southeast Asia]. Chapter 10. p. 333.

In 2001, the Toho film “Merdeka 17805” was released, depicting the Japanese who contributed to Indonesia’s independence. In the film, Japanese instructors who provided military training to Indonesian youths during the Japanese occupation are asked to become holdout Japanese soldiers after the war ended in defeat, and fight in the Indonesian War of Independence against the Netherlands. In the same year, former Defense Agency Director Nakatani Gen, and Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro the following year, visited the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata.

When Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro visited the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata in 2004, he laid a wreath with the words “In honor of the heroes, Governor of Tokyo,” before meeting with Miyahara Eiji, advisor to *Fukushi Tomo no Kai*, and others. He spoke to reporters, saying, “I came here and was able to meet some of the survivors. They fought the guerrilla war with hardly any weapons. They must have been heroes to the Indonesians at that time.”<sup>65</sup> That year, *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* received the Foreign Minister’s Commendation, and Miyahara personally received the Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays 2009.

In 2007 and 2015, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata. On those occasions, Prime Minister Abe poured sake and offered flowers at the gravestone of Eto Shichio, who lies in the Heroes Cemetery. The “ceremony” of joining hands in prayer at the individual gravestones of the holdout Japanese soldiers in addition to offering flowers at the central cenotaph was later followed by Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide in 2020 and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in 2022 when they visited the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata.<sup>66</sup>

The Emperor and Empress’s visit to the National Main Heroes Cemetery in Kalibata in 2023 was limited to offering flowers at the central cenotaph and signing the visitor’s book, and did not include a visit to the individual holdout Japanese soldiers’ cemeteries. However, it was reported that at a meeting with people with ties to Japan the night before, they met with four second- and third-generation Japanese descendants who were executives of *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* where

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<sup>65</sup> “Ishihara chiji ga eiyū bochi ni kenka: Fukushi Tomo no Kai kanbu ra to kondan [Governor Ishihara offers flowers at the heroes cemetery, meets with *Fukushi Tomo no Kai* executives].” *The Daily Jakarta Shimbun*, November 22, 2004. p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Not all of the soldiers who died in the War of Independence against the Netherlands in the late 1940s are buried in the heroes cemetery where the “patriots” are laid to rest. Many were buried in a type of general cemetery called a national cemetery, for a variety of reasons. Such reasons include not having been in the regular military and not having documentation to prove their participation in the War of Independence, bereaved family members not wishing to have a national military funeral after their death, etc. In interviews I conducted in 2007 with 21 bereaved families of fallen soldiers in Malang Province, eastern Java, I heard stories such as, even though they participated in the War of Independence, “I was too lazy to apply for the guerrilla medal” in the confusion of the reorganization and rationalization of the Indonesian army, and “I was not given the recognition corresponding to my military achievements due to my low educational background” after the War of Independence. Additionally, there were cases where soldiers were eligible to be buried in the heroes cemetery but left a will to be buried in a national cemetery for reasons such as “it is too far from the family grave and it is difficult to visit the grave,” “I do not want to be with my war comrades even in the grave,” “I was requested to make a monetary contribution to be buried in the heroes cemetery,” “I was too poor to afford burial in a heroes cemetery,” and “It was difficult to prepare the certificate both financially and effort-wise.” In some cases, the bereaved family members decided not to bury the deceased in the heroes cemetery. A comparison of the number of holdout Japanese soldiers buried in a heroes cemetery and a national cemetery by region shows that the number of those buried in a heroes cemetery exceeds the number buried in a national cemetery in the metropolitan area, but in western Java, central Java, eastern Java and Bali, and Sumatra, the number buried in heroes cemeteries is less than that buried in national cemeteries. Especially in Sumatra, the number buried in a national cemetery is high. Ibid. *Tōbu Jawa no Nipponjin butai* [Troops made of Japanese soldiers in East Java]. p. 45.

the Emperor said, “You have suffered greatly,” and the Empress said, “Tomorrow, we will offer flowers with all our hearts.”<sup>67</sup>

The meeting between the Emperor and the descendants of holdout Japanese soldiers was not seen during the former Emperor’s visit to Indonesia in 1991.<sup>68</sup> What this means is that the environment surrounding the holdout Japanese soldiers has changed over the past 30 years, and what triggered this change was the self-representation of the holdout Japanese soldiers themselves, which was amplified as a result of the mutual interaction between the parties concerned and the Japanese side.<sup>69</sup>

In the process, the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia gradually became heroes. For example, journalist Inoue Kazuhiko praised Ono Sakari, who passed away in 2014 and was buried in a national military funeral at the heroes cemetery in Batu City, East Java, as the “last hero.”<sup>70</sup>

### The reality of the “last hero”

In the NHK-produced “The Century in Moving Images Butterfly Effect: 3 Years and 8 Months of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” (broadcast on April 24, 2023), following the narration stating that “2,000 Japanese soldiers who remained fought alongside them [author’s note: the Defenders of the Fatherland organized during the Japanese occupation],” the following captions were read: “From the words of a holdout Japanese soldier: The Greater East Asia War was a war to liberate Greater East Asia, and Japan lost without achieving that goal. However, Indonesia is trying to become independent. We fought to show them what Japan could not achieve, even though we were a small force.” These words were spoken in 2004 when the author interviewed Ono Sakari, who was 85 years old at the time. He continued, “So, to say that I tried to succeed in what Japan could not accomplish would be a bit of an exaggeration.”<sup>71</sup>

However, Ono’s belief that he remained in the area, considering it to be a “crusade to liberate Asia,” is merely a “memory created” after the fact. In fact, Ono remained in Bandung, western Java, for a combination of reasons including the following. He was ordered to fly back to Hiroshima with the brigade’s military register immediately after the defeat, but was begged by his predecessor, a warrant officer, and switched places out of “kindness”; he felt that unconditional surrender was unacceptable; he was proud to be an active soldier; as a person he was serious and responsible at best, and inefficient and stubborn at worst; and was the third son of a farming family in Hokkaido and had no prospect of getting any farmland to support himself even if he did return to Japan.<sup>72</sup>

Ono became inspired by the “crusade to liberate Asia,” after leaving the Japanese military and meeting Ichiki Tatsuo, an advocate of Pan-Asianism in Yogyakarta, central Java. He wrote in his “battlefield diary” on March 12, 1946, that “Japan, which liberated Indonesia from Dutch

<sup>67</sup> “Ryō heika, zanryū Nipponhei no shison ra to gomenkai [Their Majesties meet descendants of holdout Japanese soldiers].” *The Sankei News*. June 20, 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko met with the families of former holdout Japanese soldiers when they visited Vietnam in 2017, and in 2023, Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko also met with the families of former holdout Japanese soldiers.

<sup>69</sup> Previous studies tended to downplay this process of intrinsic heroization and simply relate the Asian liberation war theory to the holdout Japanese soldiers. Ibid. “‘Kaihō sensō’ shikan/‘dokuritsu kōken’ shikan no kyomōsei [Deceptiveness of ‘liberation war’ and ‘contribution to independence’ views of history].” pp. 327–329.

<sup>70</sup> Inoue Kazuhiko. *Nippon ga tatakatte kurete kansha shite imasu 2: Ano sensō de Nipponjin ga sonkei sareta riyū* [We are grateful that Japan fought for us 2: The reason why the Japanese were respected in that war]. Sankei Shimbun Publications. 2015. pp. 150–155.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. *Zanryū Nipponhei no shinjitsu* [Truth about the holdout Japanese soldiers]. pp. 75–76.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. *Zanryū Nipponhei no shinjitsu* [Truth about the holdout Japanese soldiers]. pp. 86–89.

oppression, is a nation of the yellow race. We are brothers belonging to the same Asian race. In order to bring peace to Asia, I hereto pledge to wholeheartedly fight together and die together hand in hand with my Indonesian brothers.”<sup>73</sup> and positioned his reason for remaining as a “crusade to liberate Asia” for the first time. On the other hand, in his battlefield diary for May 1946, he mentions that there were holdout Japanese soldiers who had “left the military due to relations with women or for other reasons such as personal success,”<sup>74</sup> and he encourages them to return to it, fearing that “this will be known by the people of Indonesia in the future or even today, and when the people of Indonesia find themselves in a difficult fight or in social disorder in the future, these Japanese who will not be able to directly participate in the fight for independence may encounter unforeseen disasters.”<sup>75</sup>

Ono’s battlefield diary, a valuable historical document from that period,<sup>76</sup> shows that he was negative about not fighting for a cause and staying behind to live. However, for many of the holdout Japanese soldiers, it is inferred that their participation in the Indonesian War of Independence was not an ideological decision, but a decision for survival.

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<sup>73</sup> Ono Sakari (edited and commented by Hayashi Eiichi). *Nampō gunsei kankei shiryō 42: Indoneshia zanryū Nipponhei no shakaishi* [Documents related to military administration in the southern territories #42: Social history of the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia]. Ryuukeishosha. 2010. p. 48.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. *Indoneshia zanryū Nipponhei no shakaishi* [Social history of the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia]. p. 58.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. *Indoneshia zanryū Nipponhei no shakaishi* [Social history of the holdout Japanese soldiers in Indonesia]. p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> “Kyū nipponhei no nikki wo hakken: Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō ni sansen [Diary of former Japanese soldier discovered: Joining the Indonesian War of Independence].” Society page of *The Asahi Shimbun* morning edition. November 2, 2005. “Ikita akashi: Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō no nikki, jō—Kesshi no hibi, kokumei ni [Proof of his life: Diary of the Indonesian War of Independence, part 1—Clear record of the desperate days].” General culture page of *The Asahi Shimbun* morning edition. November 2, 2005. “Ikita akashi: Indoneshia dokuritsu sensō no nikki, ge—‘Tsutaetai’ hikitsugu negai [Proof of his life: Diary of the Indonesian War of Independence, part 2—Taking over their wish to ‘pass on’].” General culture page of *The Asahi Shimbun* morning edition. November 3, 2005.