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**Beyond Collaboration and Resistance: Accommodation and the Weihsien
Internment Camp, China, 1943-1945**

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the experiences of some 2,000 allied civilians in the Japanese-run Weih sien Internment Camp (濰縣集中營) in Shandong, China from 1943 to 1945. Beyond serving as a counterpoint to the Japanese internment in North America during the Second World War, the Weih sien Camp also represents a rare point of contact between Western civilians and the Japanese that came about as part of Japan's effort to sweep away any remaining vestiges of Western colonial society in Asia. Government documents, supplemented by both published and unpublished memoirs, letters, and diaries reveal the ways in which the internee community organised camp life under Japanese guard in a manner that defies straightforward categorisation as either 'resistance' or 'collaboration.' Instead, the internees as a community reached an accommodation to the realities of life in a Japanese internment camp that allowed them considerable latitude and agency in their daily life.

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NOTE ON TERMS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

Depending on the author, the camp at Weihsien, and other similar camps operated by the Japanese, has been described alternately as a concentration camp, internment camp, prison camp, POW camp, and in one missionary's memoir, "consecration camp." The Japanese term, Civil Assembly Center (CAC) has been used only infrequently. Elizabeth Vaughan, a trained sociologist who published a formal study on her experiences in Bacolod and Santo Tomás, uses "internment camp" in the subtitle of her work and concentration camp elsewhere.

Chinese-language sources stand in contrast to this, using only *jízhōngyíng* (集中營, concentration camp) to refer to the camp. In the Chinese context, where Weihsien remains obscure and Japanese brutality notorious, using the term "concentration camp" creates an unwarranted association between Weihsien and places like Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen.¹

In this study, "internment camp" is used exclusively to describe Weihsien, with the sole exception of direct quotations from other sources which may use alternate terms. At the Weihsien Camp, there were no incidents of slave labour or execution amongst the internees, all of whom were civilians rather than military personnel, thereby making other terminology misleading.

¹ The most egregious example of this can be found in Wang Gang, "Weifang jizhongying lide tonghua," *xianfeng guojia lishi*, No. 19, 2009: pg 30-33, which intersperses images of Weihsien with images taken from the Bergen-Belsen Camp in Germany, despite Weihsien being the sole subject of the article. Only somewhat less inflammatory is He Tianyi's *Yazhou de Aosiweixin : Rijun qin hua ji zhong ying jiemi* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2007), although with "Asian Auschwitz" written across the cover in English, the point still gets across.

In the case of Chinese words, the Hanyu Pinyin system will be used for transliterations, with the exception of place names such as Weihsien and Chefoo which are referred to using the traditional spellings familiar to the interneers and which refer to places which are in any event known by different names in contemporary China (Weifang and Yantai, respectively). Direct quotations from sources using other spellings will be followed by the pinyin in parentheses as necessary to avoid confusion.

PREFACE

Sitting at my desk in the teachers' offices of Yantai Korean School back in 2005, I often found myself staring out the window over a field of clover. Sunk into the greenery at the far end of the field was an old church, complete with faded tile roof and a worn stone exterior. The church marked the edge of a small cluster of buildings, with the seashore on one side and a field on the other. Despite the quaint appearance, this was no rural hamlet in Europe or North America; rather, this small encampment was in Yantai, China, and served as a reminder of the foreign communities that sprang up along the China coast following the Opium Wars. On my first trip to China, earlier in 2002, the dusty old buildings sitting along the shore in Yantai had provoked my curiosity, but they remained only of passing interest to me.

It was only on a subsequent visit to Hong Kong in 2007 that I came to understand some of the significance of the area I had once regarded merely as an interesting place to spend the afternoon. Through the introduction of a friend, I met a retired missionary who had been a young boy at the Chefoo School in Yantai when the Japanese took over the school and had spent the next three years of his life in internment, first at the Temple Hill Camp in Yantai, and later at Weih sien. Over the course of an afternoon, he shared with me his story, of life at the Chefoo School as the child of missionaries, and then as a young internee at the Weih sien camp, cut off from the wider world and the care of his parents. I was immediately intrigued—here in the internment camp I had found a 'case

study' of life in China under the Japanese, a community of 2,000 expatriates² who experienced first-hand Japan's occupation of China, and who could speak to me directly about these events on a more personal level.

Out of that initial conversation came the topic of my M.A. research, leading to months of scouring the catalogues of various missionary organisations in Australia, Britain, Canada and the UK for faded reports and stray letters that shed light on life in the camp. Initially the material came achingly slow and I concentrated on the low-hanging fruit of published memoirs and the odd academic work that touched on the topic, however briefly. In early 2009 a grant from the University of Alberta's Department of History and Classics and the Graduate Student's Association facilitated a trip to Ottawa for archival research, thus yielding several pages of official documentation of camp conditions collected after a partial repatriation in 1943. Besides providing a rough outline of camp conditions through various figures and other data, these materials gave useful biographical tags that proved helpful in tracking down the stories of individual internees.

Despite the seeming obscurity of a place like Weih sien, the range of names that have come to be associated with the camp is impressive. Eric Liddell, already famous as an Olympic athlete and later brought to Hollywood via 1981's 'Chariots of Fire,' became a personal hero to many people in Weih sien for his warmth and generosity to the younger

² The Weih sien group was distinctly international, with British, American, Canadian, Dutch, and Australian nationals (some of whom had been born in China and never set foot in their 'homelands') making up the majority. Mary Servatia has noted the cosmopolitan nature of the camp, even down to the church, which she describes as built from "Chinese brick, Oregon fir beams, German steel binding plates and rods, Belgian glass windows, Manchurian pine pews and British cement." See Mary Servatia, *A Cross in China: The Story of My Mission* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Cuchullain Publications, 1989), pg 216. Other internees were less impressed by the diversity of camp life.

internees. Liddell was sadly missed following his death in the camp hospital from a brain tumour in February of 1945, mere months before the camp's liberation, and it is a sign of the esteem with which he was held that in recent years a prominent memorial stone has been erected on the grounds of the camp in his memory.³ Significant to students of Chinese history, Arthur and Mary Wright, later to become prominent Sinologists at Yale, were both interned at Weihsien, with Arthur using the time to edit his doctoral thesis and Mary to brush up on her Chinese. Internee Sandra Small, whose husband Lawrence Small recently resigned amidst scandal as Secretary of the Smithsonian, is also remembered at the camp's exhibition centre for her contribution of funds towards a scholarship for local students.

Other internees were decidedly more accessible—Hilda Hale, for one, spent over fifty years of her post-Weihsien life in Victoria, BC, as an educator and local promoter of Asian art before passing away in 2008. Similarly, staff members from some of the famous organisations from the Western establishment in China, notably HSBC, the Shanghai Municipal Council, the China Inland Mission, China Maritime Customs and Yenching University, among others, found themselves interned at Weihsien as the Japanese swept along the China coast.⁴

³ Standing over six feet tall, the slab of pink marble proclaims the area to be the “Eric Liddell Sports Ground,” and eulogizes Liddell with a simple epitaph from the Book of Isaiah: “They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary.”

⁴ A few other prominent internees include Watson McMillan Hayes, former president of the North China Theological Seminary, future International Boxing Hall of Famer Lope Sarreal, and Harold Shadick, translator of Liu E's *The Travels of Lao Ts'an* and future director of Cornell University's East Asian Studies Programme, among many others.

As the project began to take form, I continued to scour the internet, tracking down the odd memoir, but it was the discovery of a website and an online list serve maintained by former internees that marked a turning point in my work. Scattered across the globe from Vancouver to London to Hong Kong and all points in between, from June of 2000 former internees at Weih sien and their family members had once again congregated at an email discussion list supported by online company Topica and managed by former internee Natasha Peterson. From this came a record of what now amounts to over ten years worth of conversation filled with reminiscing, reunions and research, all contributions from the list's 73 registered subscribers and an impossible to determine number of casual visitors.

Carefully recorded in logs open to the public, the Weih sien internees reconnected with old friends, co-ordinated birthday and thank-you cards for the American servicemen who liberated the camp, and helped co-ordinate a reunion hosted by the Weifang Municipal Government. As part of the 60th anniversary of their liberation from the camp, over 100 former internees returned to Weifang for a reunion that saw the remaining camp buildings partially restored and an exhibition centre dedicated to the camp opened in a building formerly used to house the camp's Japanese guards.

These celebrations and continued contacts point to the enduring resonance that Weih sien has with both Chinese and Western audiences. By the time of my own visit to the former site of the camp, the Weifang authorities had completed a massive redevelopment project that highlighted the location's historical significance. Standing in sharp contrast to the dilapidated buildings of the old Temple Hill Camp in the more

prosperous neighbouring Yantai, or the well-preserved but largely un-marked Stanley Camp in Hongkong, the Weifang government's efforts to renew and maintain the Weih sien Camp represents a valuable effort to preserve one of the lesser-known aspects of China's war with Japan.

Although public commemoration of the camp was virtually non-existent following the war, the site of the camp and use of the surrounding grounds maintained a surprising consistency for nearly a century.⁵ From the establishment of a missionary compound that provided local hospital care and education, the area became home to Weifang People's Hospital and #2 Middle School post-1949, with the #2 Middle School taking the remarkable step of recently reverting to the old missionary-era name of Guangwen Middle School. The re-developed urban green space dedicated to the camp and known as Ledao Square after the original name of the old mission compound now features a memorial square, replete with a dove-strewn obelisk listing the names of individual internees on the plinth. Statues of elated former internees mingling with American servicemen and local Chinese standing around the base complete the scene.

Erected sixty years after the war, the new memorial park and exhibition centre stands as proof of the historical significance of the Weih sien Camp. Far from being merely a small part of the local history of Weifang, Ledao Square serves as site of remembrance not only for the experiences of the many internees who were held at Weih sien so many years ago, but also by extension the varied experiences and hardships of civilians in times

⁵ The camp hospital's cornerstone appeared to have been targeted for particular damage, possibly during the Cultural Revolution, thus obscuring the building's former missionary affiliation. Photographs from 1925 show the stone originally read "Shadyside Hospital 1924" in English and 基督教醫院 [Christian Hospital] in Chinese. See Deng Hua, *Bai nian cang sang Ledaoyuan: The Centenary Vicissitudes of Ledaoyuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo dang'an chubanshe, 2005), pg 1.

of war. The following work therefore stands as a modest, initial effort toward directing scholarly attention to this particular chapter of the Second World War in East Asia.

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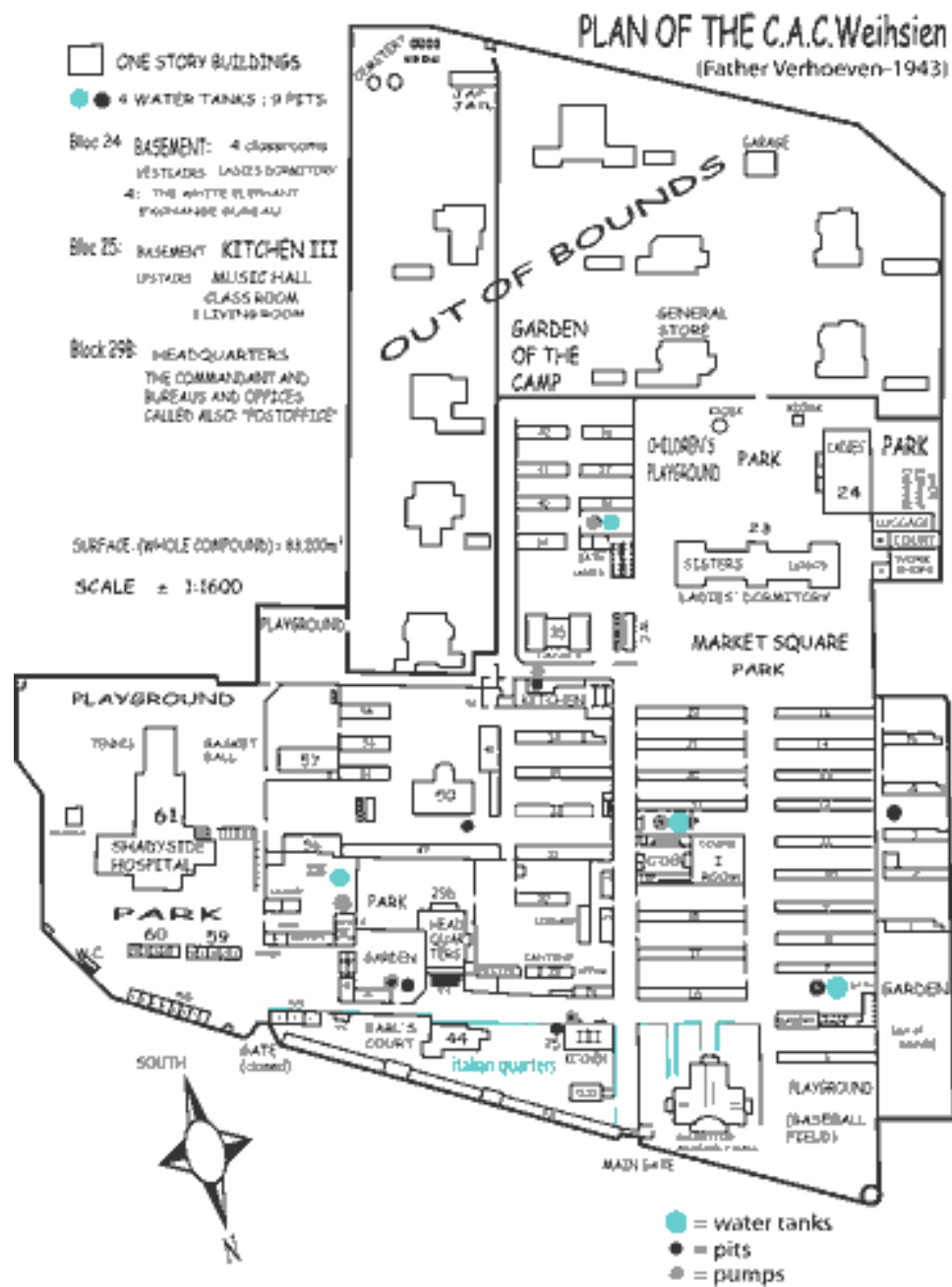


Figure 1: Map of the Weih sien Camp⁶

⁶ Provided by Leopold Pander.

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Weih sien Internment Camp⁷ exists against the backdrop of two major historical events. Most notably for the internees themselves, though they may have imagined otherwise at the time, the process of internment marked the end of the treaty port era, of formal empire, when the Western enclaves in Tianjin, Shanghai and elsewhere thrived and prospered on Chinese soil but existed above Chinese law. The second event, of course, is the eventual outbreak of the Pacific War.⁸

In bridging these two topics, Weih sien reveals both the ways in which Western expatriates responded to their straitened circumstances, and the ways in which conditions in the Japanese internment camps, which were established throughout the territories that Japan seized during the war, were far from uniform and in fact were deeply contingent on time, place, and personality. A.V.H. Hartendorp has noted the seeming absence of a Japanese plan for running the internment camps, arguing “It appeared that the Japanese did not have a standard plan for the organization and management of internment camps. What type of organization developed probably depended chiefly on the character and

⁷ Written “Weixian” using the Hanyu Pinyin romanisation.

⁸ Conspiracy theorists have settled upon Weih sien as the backdrop of a third event: the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. Some believe Weih sien to be the possible holding place of the famed American aviatrix during the war years. See Rollin C. Reineck, “Captive of the Japanese,” *Air Classics* (Jun, 1999) accessed via http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3901/is_199906/ai_n8864189/?tag=content;col1 on 20th May, 2009; also see Pamela Masters, *The Mushroom Years: A Story of Survival* (Camino, California: Henderson Publishing, 1998), pg *xi*. One of the American paratroopers who liberated Weih sien, James Hannon, advanced a similar theory in his fictionalised account of the camp—see James Jess Hannon, *Secret of Weifang* (Bloomington, Indiana: Authorhouse, 2004).

attitude of the officer in command, the situation and size of the camp, and the strength, efficiency, and diplomacy of whatever internee organization was involved.”⁹

In most respects, internees at Weihsien were fortunate. American authorities in charge of repatriation during the war seemed to share a similar assessment of the camps in Shandong, as evidenced by the decision to give internees there only third highest priority for repatriation, behind camps in Thailand, Hongkong, Indochina, and places like Dairen, Harbin, Mukden, Hankow, Nanking, Hainan Island, Tsinan, Keijo, Tsingtao, Amoy, Swatow, and Chefoo, with only Shanghai and Tokyo itself being ranked lower.¹⁰ Far from the front, the area surrounding Weihsien avoided the aerial bombardment and gunfire that threatened internees in other camps further to the south. Formal administrative responsibility remained in the hands of the Japanese Consulate at Qingdao, with authority in the camp divided between a Camp Commandant and a Chief of Police in charge of some fifty consular guards.¹¹ The guards, by most accounts, eschewed the use of violence towards the internees, however brutal they may have been with the Chinese outside the camp.¹² But the internees, both individually and through their camp

⁹ A.V.H Hartendorp, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines*, Vol. 1 (Manila: Bookmark, 1967) pg. 174.

¹⁰ Bruce Elleman, *Japanese-American Civilian Prisoner Exchanges and Detention Camps, 1941-45* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pg 30.

¹¹ William G. Norwood, *Chronological Report on Duck Mission*, 7th September 1945, copy provided by Leopold Pander.

¹² Internee Marie Regier writes of the disbelief that a fellow internee encountered from the press after being repatriated when she claimed to have no stories of Japanese atrocities to relate. In contrast, another account tells of a brutal beating at the hands of a Japanese guard, although such events are by far the rare exception to the rule at Weihsien, rather than the norm. See Marie J. Regier, “The Cloud over my Second Term in China,” pg 64, Box 2, Folder 29, Marie J. Regier Frantz Janzen Papers, Manuscript Collections, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College; and Connie Ong, *Letta in China: Great is thy Faithfulness* (Xulon Press, 2000), pg 168-169.

committee, made crucial decisions that determined the nature of their lives under the Japanese.

In this thesis, I argue that internees reached an accommodation with the reality of their internment and acted to make the best of camp conditions. Quite apart from Japanese direction, internees adapted social roles and structures from their earlier lives in China for the purpose of enhancing community life in camp. Various committees maintained an active schedule of educational, religious, and entertainment activities. Taking advantage of the high degree of autonomy in governing themselves, internees filled their off-hours with everything from lectures on religion or history to dances, art classes, and various performances.

In spite of this, internee memoirs often chart their lives at Weihsien around a series of key acts of resistance—starting with Father Scanlan’s black market activities, news from the ‘bamboo wireless,’ the dramatic escape of Lawrence Tipton and Arthur Hummel, and concluding with the sudden and triumphant arrival of an American OSS team to liberate the camp. Flavoured with a sense of triumph in adversity, and more often than not also including a few good-natured digs at the Japanese, these memoirs typically cast sheer survival as a form of victory over their captors,¹³ with few writers willing to delve more deeply into the murkier aspects of what survival in the camp could entail.

¹³ Pamela Masters casts an explicit connection between victory and survival by portraying her thwarted suicide attempt at Weihsien as a near victory for the Japanese. See Masters, *The Mushroom Years*, pg 204-206.

Accordingly, the concept of resistance has played a central role in such narratives, most often taking the form of defiance of camp regulations on smuggling, communicating with the outside world, and, in the case of Tipton and Hummel, actually escaping the camp. But while internees frequently defied their Japanese captors, these narratives have also obscured the way in which the internees worked collaboratively with the Japanese to ensure their own survival and for the good of their own community. While some internees have in fact made oblique mention of the rare internee who chose to act as an informant for the guards, more often than not such an individual would be judged as “nothing more than a mere opportunist”¹⁴ and promptly dismissed. In so doing, previous writers have obviated any further need to critically examine the ways in which the internees interacted as a community with the Japanese guards tasked with running the camp.

In spite of the predominance of the theme of ‘survival as victory’ that is evident in many of the Weih sien memoirs, there is certainly further room for explorations of the ways in which the internees responded to the camp environment. By re-telling the story of Weih sien, I will demonstrate that while resistance does indeed emerge as a significant facet in the relations between captive and captor, the internees as a community reached an accommodation with their guards that included occasional acts of collaboration.

Literature Review: Collaboration and Internment

¹⁴ Greg Leck, *Captives of Empire: the Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China, 1941-1945* (Bangor, PA: Shandy Press, 2006), pg 365.

In analyzing the ways in which internees responded to life in the camp, I have chosen to situate this project within the literatures on Japan's internment camps and wartime collaboration with Japan in occupied China. Japan's system of camps has been the subject of much interest since the end of the war, with the image of the loincloth-clad POW taking root in the popular mind thanks to films like *King Rat* or *Bridge on the River Kwai*. Academic works on civilian internees, however, have been rather few in comparison to those on POWs, although as this review suggests, interest has certainly grown among scholars in the past ten years as they have moved from battlefield to home front in their narratives of the war.

Recent works that have explored the internment phenomenon have included studies of individual camps,¹⁵ specific nationalities under internment,¹⁶ and more general analyses of the internment phenomenon.¹⁷ While some of these studies have touched on the Weihsien Camp,¹⁸ the missionary composition of the Weihsien Camp population, in which slightly less than one in three internees were affiliated with missionary organizations of one kind or another, has often been overlooked. The missionary character of Weihsien was important in that it determined the nature of the camp experience, as fundamentally as when Vatican influence succeeded in having a large

¹⁵ Geoffrey Charles Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942-1945: Life in the Japanese Civilian Camp at Stanley* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Christina Twomey, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Bernice Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians Under the Japanese, 1941-1945: A Patchwork of Internment* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) and Leck's *Captives of Empire*.

¹⁸ The one partial exception to this is Christina Spink's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "An Oral History Case Study on the Co-Construction of Schooling at the *Chefoo* School and in Weihsien Internment Camp," which is focused on the success of the Weihsien internees' educational efforts in the camp in spite of the hardships of life in an internment camp, rather than the subject of internment itself.

number of Catholic internees transferred, and somewhat more tangentially, as when missionaries used their contacts with local clergy or other Christian communities to obtain supplies from outside the camp.

Unlike studies of internment, the topic of collaboration in the Chinese context has only recently emerged in academic studies. Despite the 1972 publication of two volumes on the collaborationist regime of Wang Jingwei,¹⁹ wartime collaboration lingered in the shadows of English-language research on China, and only occasionally appeared in Chinese academia in the form of document collections related to the Wang regime. It was only in 1995, with a conference in Vancouver, Canada, dedicated to the topic, that Western scholars began drawing on the historiography of the occupied states in Western Europe to examine the phenomenon of collaboration in wartime China.

James Mace Ward's 2008 article, "Legitimate Collaboration: The Administration of Santo Tom s Internment Camp and Its Histories, 1942-2003," marks the meeting point of the literature on collaboration and internment. Ward sets out to apply the approaches used in recent analyses of collaboration in Europe to a new Asian context, using Santo Tom s as a test case. Santo Tom s, the largest of the camps in the Philippines, operated from 1942 until the liberation of the camp in 1945, and, as Ward notes, has largely been portrayed as a site of American resistance to the Japanese invader.

¹⁹ John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945; The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972), and Gerald E. Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy; Wang Ching-Wei and the China War, 1937-1941* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972)

In contrast to more traditional histories, Ward calls into question this narrative of resistance, instead putting forth a concept of “legitimate collaboration” to describe the members of the internee administration who worked “as middlemen, carrying out Japanese orders in exchange for privileges, both for themselves and for the camp.”²⁰ Ward’s project is simple: to refine common understandings of collaboration so as to include legitimate and, presumably, illegitimate variations by separating the act of working with or for the enemy and the issue of whether or not such actions can be deemed acceptable morally or politically.

In a certain sense, Ward is engaged in a bait and switch that strips the concept of wartime collaboration of its essential meaning, thereby allowing him to use an inflammatory descriptor for what could also be called mere compliance. The fact that the appropriateness of such compliance with the enemy is indeed determined by pre-established social standards and questions of intent makes this kind of “bait and switch” similar to an effort to re-cast manslaughter as “legitimate murder.” One might also note that those he accuses of collaboration were American civilians in what Ward classifies as an American commonwealth—the Philippines—rather than the purely expatriate communities that populated other camps. Evidence of how far Ward has internalized this redefinition crops up in his claim that Santo Tomás “is one of several collaborations—ranging from other internment and POW camps to the Channel Islands—that have been accepted and even honored by Britain and the United States,” a point which argues convincingly for his attempts to legitimize collaboration only if one ignores that he is

²⁰ James Mace Ward, “Legitimate Collaboration: The Administration of Santo Tomás Internment Camp and Its Histories, 1942-2003,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 2: pg 160.

presuming approval of actions in Santo Tom  s were made on the basis of a similar understanding of collaboration as he is now proposing, rather than the conventional narrative of resistance that he is reacting against.²¹

Drawing on records from the camp’s internee administration, internee memoirs and diaries, and some of the many secondary sources published on the camp, Ward argues that traditional accounts of Santo Tom  s have re-cast what should have been a narrative of collaboration instead as a narrative of resistance. Rather than reflecting on collaboration at Santo Tom  s, historians and internees have presented “a survival story of internees ‘fighting with everything they had,’”²² either by downplaying acts of slavish collaboration in favour of acts of resistance, however small, or by presenting acts of collaboration as acts of “pure resistance or a double game.”²³

Having argued that internees collaborated with the Japanese at Santo Tom  s, Ward then goes much further in his arguments and makes the claim that “collaboration within Japanese internment camps was virtually ubiquitous.”²⁴ But such generalizations are rife with risk given the great diversity of camps operating under the Japanese at the time. Similar studies that have approached internment through a multi-camp perspective reveal the hazards involved in making arguments about the ubiquity, virtual or otherwise, of any one phenomena or another in Japan’s internment camps.

²¹ Ibid, pg 197.

²² Ibid, pg 194.

²³ Ibid, pg 197.

²⁴ Ibid, pg 196.

According to Tim Brook, writing in *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China*, the phenomenon of collaboration turns on one question: whether or not those alleged to have collaborated actually exercised power.²⁵ Brook's work, which draws on Henrik Dethlefsen's definition of collaboration to analyse the bargains struck between Chinese who lived in the warzone and their Japanese occupiers, stands as the most prominent analysis of collaboration in the Chinese context and is also inspiring as a study of collaboration 'from below,' as opposed to the more Petain-style, top-down variant that has been so emblematic of studies of collaboration.

Under Brook's analysis, the rigid opposition between collaboration and resistance as adhered to by more traditional histories of the wartime era is made to crumble. Like Ward, Brook is aware of the strong moral claims made by traditional histories of collaboration, but, unlike Ward, he is more interested in setting aside issues of morality altogether, instead noting "It is useful to ask why some Chinese chose to cooperate with the Japanese, but it may be more important to inquire why cooperation made sense to people at that time."²⁶ The difference between the two is simple: Brook seeks to examine more closely how local Chinese elites settled on collaboration as a response to occupation, while Ward attempts to simply cast the act of collaboration in a new, more legitimate light.

²⁵ Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), pg 2.

²⁶ Ibid, pg 245.

But while scholars of collaboration might wrangle over the definitions, implications and significance of collaboration, histories of the internment camps seldom touch on the issue apart from occasional, brief asides about those internees who opted to play the role of stool pigeon. Many of these works have been primarily descriptive and have lacked a clear analytical framework.

In the past fifteen years, both former Weihsien internee Norman Cliff and Greg Leck have produced works on Japan's system of camps that are undeniably informative, but both shy away from explaining or theorizing about internment. Following her release from Weihsien in 1943 Augusta Wagner, a missionary and former professor of economics at Yenching University, wrote a report for submission to the United States government contrasting conditions in Weihsien with those at Crystal City, an internment camp for Japanese Americans in Texas. More well-known is the work of former University of North Carolina researcher and one-time instructor at the University of the Philippines Elizabeth Head Vaughan, who bills her report as "the sociological study of a Japanese concentration camp in the Philippine Islands" and notes that it "may be regarded as the report of an involuntary participant observer."²⁷ Vaughan's work documented the varying impacts that internment had on men and women and sought to discover in which ways "modern civilization equipped or handicapped men and women for survival within an internment camp environment."²⁸

²⁷ Elizabeth Head Vaughan, *Community under Stress: an Internment Camp Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), pg vii.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pg 4-5.

Cliff bills his work as simply an “overview of the sequence of events in China and Hong Kong in World War II relating to the arrest, imprisonment and release of some 13,000 Allied civilian prisoners.”²⁹ Cliff narrates these events with competence, reflecting his own awareness of his surroundings as a young man interned at Weihsien, but he seldom seeks to do more than simply narrate a series of events. “All former prisoners,” we learn, “have spoken with appreciation and praise of the efficient internal running of the camp by fellow internees,” but insufficient detail or explanation is offered.³⁰

Similarly, Greg Leck’s *Captives of Empire: The Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China 1941-1945* is an extensive reference work on the camps, organised thematically for the first half of the book and by camp for the second half. Leck confines his discussion of collaboration to individual cases, and highlights those who were idealists who believed in the Japanese cause, those who gave in to blackmail, and those who were simply opportunists, thereby treating collaboration as an individual, sporadic phenomenon.³¹

Christina Twomey’s work, *Australia’s Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two*, serves as the most intriguing example of the difficulty in making categorizations about internment under the Japanese that the very term ‘collaboration’ often entails. Rather than employing categories of region, camp, or gender,

²⁹ Norman Cliff, *Prisoners of the Samurai* (Essex: Courtyard Publishers, 1998) pg 15.

³⁰ Ibid, pg 104.

³¹ Leck, *Captives of Empire*, pg 360.

Twomey approaches internment through the lens of nationality. In doing so, she is able to draw a narrative arc that stretches from the (non)evacuation of internees from the path of Japan's advance in the lead-up to and early phases of the war right through to the internees' struggle for compensation and commemoration in the post-war era. *Forgotten Prisoners* thus creates a wider picture of civilian internment, including how internees came to be trapped in the war zone; how they coped with life in the camps; how they struggled to rebuild their lives amidst the shattered colonialism of post-war East Asia; and how their treatment at the hands of the Australian government differed from that of the oft-lionised POWs.

But while *Forgotten Prisoners* does cast light on a previously ignored chapter in the history of internment and provides inspiration for further research into the experience of other internees following the war, it is not without shortcomings. Simply by virtue of approaching the whole of Japan's internment project through the lens of nationality, Twomey tends to paint internment in broad brushstrokes, leaving a hazy picture of a phenomenon that spanned from Sumatra to the Sea of Japan, continued from the start of Japan's invasion until the end of the war, affected over 130,000 Allied civilians, and meant the operation of hundreds of camps ranging in size from four to 14,000 internees.³²

More persuasive is Bernice Archer's *The Internment of Western Civilians under the Japanese 1941-1945: A Patchwork of Internment*, which again attempts to tackle the whole of Japan's internment camps, this time through "representative" glimpses at

³² Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians*, pg 5.

various camps as presented by a patchwork of sources—interviews with former internees, diaries, government sources, and, interestingly, the patchwork quilts stitched by interned women. Through these quilts, Archer navigates the complex responses to internment faced by interned women, arguing for the compatibility of both femininity and heroism in their response. The important underlying theme of Archer’s work is to explore the ways in which internees—men, women, and children—retained agency in their own lives despite the experience of being interned and the presence of the Japanese.

While Archer’s title may have simply been inspired by her previous work on the patchwork quilt as a source of insight into the experiences of interned women, the result in her latest book is likewise a “patchwork” view of the internment phenomenon. American-dominated camps in the Philippines, Dutch-dominated camps in Java and Sumatra, and predominantly British Stanley, Changyi and Lughwa camps form the backbone of her study. Although Archer bases her work on numerous interviews with internees and primary source documents, the fact remains that Japan’s internment camps were too vast a phenomenon to be covered in a single book.

The fate of religious communities is one facet of internment that gets downplayed through the use of Archer’s broad overview approach to internment. On page 102, in a general description of the camps, Archer notes the absence of “church buildings and religious and national artefacts”³³—yet this overlooks the fact that many camps, by virtue

³³ Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians*, pg 102. Archer repeats this idea—“no church buildings in any of the camps”—on page 106. In contrast, Japanese historian Utsumi Aiko notes the presence of “churches designated as internment camps” in the Dutch East Indies. See Utsumi Aiko, “Japanese Army Internment Policies for Enemy Civilians during the Asia-Pacific War,” in *Multicultural Japan: Paleolithic*

of being on the grounds of mission compounds or universities, came equipped with a church building or chapel.

The Weih sien Camp, the most significant in all of China north of Shanghai, was situated in a former American Presbyterian mission compound, complete with an old Edwardian church, while



Figure 2: Belgian Scheutists in the camp satire ‘Tony’ at Weih sien

the Yangzhou Camp C also was similarly dominated by a large church.³⁴ Many of the monks and nuns of the myriad Catholic orders operating in China similarly found themselves interned in their Beijing abbeys and monasteries for various durations. For those expatriates interned in Northern China, the role of religion and of missionaries in the camps is hard to ignore, especially when one considers the ways in which internees’ religious beliefs would shape the ways in which they would later recount their experiences.

to *Postmodern*, eds. Donald Denoon, Mark Hudson, Gavan McCormack, and Tessa Morris-Suzuki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pg 202.

³⁴ Norman Cliff, *Prisoners of the Samurai*, pg 58.

Having thus downplayed churches and other overt signs of religion, Archer similarly emphasizes the shadow of constant violence or threat of violence over the whole of the internment camps:

(P)hysical and psychological vulnerability, insecurity and fear added to the general demoralization, powerlessness and tension that already existed in the overcrowded camps. Pilfering or stealing were regular occurrences among the internees, face slapping and rifle butting from the guards was endemic but, as the men soon discovered, torture and execution would also take place.³⁵

It would surely be inappropriate to suggest that an atmosphere of fear and powerless did not exist in the camps, but it is equally misleading to present such an atmosphere as the *general* condition pervading *all* of Japan's internment camps.³⁶

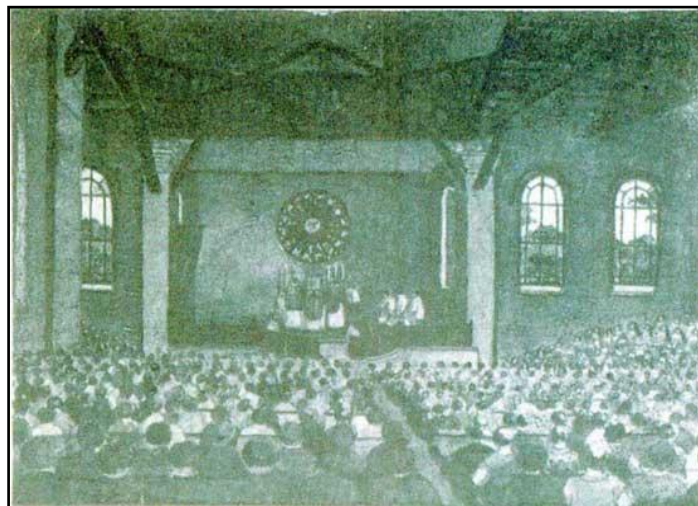


Figure 3: Church interior, Weihsien, by Fr Louis Schmid

³⁵ Archer, *The Internment of Western Civilians*, pg 77.

³⁶ Some internee diaries written by those sent home aboard the *Gripsholm* in 1943 suggest an atmosphere primarily of boredom in which the Japanese appear only as marginal characters, existing largely as gatekeepers and watchmen who remained in the backdrop of the larger drama of internment camp life. See Howard S. Galt, "The Internment Camp at Wei Hsien Shantung: March-Sept., 1943," China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection (Record Group #8), Divinity Library Special Collections, Yale University, New Haven.

In a study like Archer's, which attempts to take the entirety of Japan's internment camps from 1941 to 1945 as a subject of analysis divided neatly into "The Men's Response to Internment," "The Women's Response to Internment," and "The Children's Response to Internment," far too much is lost by arbitrary decisions to exclude various counter-narratives. Some camps operated only in the early phase of the war, when food supplies were less likely to be disrupted, allied attacks were less likely to occur, and internees were in relatively good health, having only recently entered the camps. Others operated only towards the end of the war and represented a consolidation of multiple smaller camps. Archer's approach, of taking a handful of camps as representative for the system as a whole, has the drawback of obscuring the fundamental differences which existed between the various camps and over the course of the war.

Pointing out instances where fear was not all pervasive, where church spires still stretched into the sky, or where people reacted to internment in ways outside the scope of Archer's work is not simply an exercise in fact-checking; rather, it affirms the reality that internment meant vastly different things to people in different camps, and indeed to different individuals within the same camp. In short, it is an attempt to add necessary nuance to an undeniably complex picture.

This is not to say that Archer's assertions are without basis, but rather that they should be taken as what they are: insufficiently detailed conclusions that do not take into account the myriad conditions throughout the camps that existed over the course of the war. But if one accepts statements like Archer's regarding the endemic torture and

execution as *generally* true, what then is the significance of a camp like Weihsien? Such a camp is not merely a rare, isolated exception, but rather serves as a testament to the pure arbitrariness of internment and the contingent nature of life in the camps.

The case of the Weihsien camp serves to underline the reality that life in Japan's internment camps was far from uniform. The varying conditions in time and place in which the camps were set, the temperament of individual camp commandants and guards, the ability of the internees to cope with the various hardships of internment—these and many other factors significantly impacted life in any particular camp.³⁷ Rather than presenting such a multi-faceted reality, Archer is forced, by the confines of a study that seeks to encapsulate the whole of the internment experience in a single book, to present a far too homogenized image of life in Japan's internment camps.

Methodology and Source Materials

One former internee has noted that just as there were 2,000 people interned at Weihsien, so there could be 2,000 'stories' of life in the internment camp.³⁸ In this regard, it is worth noting just which history of Weihsien I am attempting to tell.

For the time being, this cannot be the story of the Japanese guards and commandants who ran Weihsien, nor is it a story that even allows them the right of reply to issues that

³⁷ In the case of Weihsien, there are two chronological groups of internees as a result of a prisoner exchange that took place in 1943.

³⁸ Mary Taylor Previte, comment on the "*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*" Email Discussion List, Jan 26, 2004 16:38 PST.

concern them.³⁹ Nor, by and large, is it the story of the Chinese community in the nearby town of Weih sien, although efforts have been made to incorporate Chinese source material, and Chinese voices, wherever possible.



Figure 4: Earl Whaley Jazz Band, Shanghai, 1934

My work does not tell the story of the Earl Whaley jazz band. American bandleader Earl Whaley had persuaded his band mates to leave Seattle for Shanghai in 1934 with promises

of good pay, more respect, and

the endless circuit of parties for which expatriate life in the International Settlement and French Concession was famous. But following the Japanese roundup, life for the group changed dramatically. One of Whaley's band mates died of appendicitis shortly after arriving at Weih sien, while Whaley himself had both his hands broken after a confrontation with Japanese guards. Following the war, Whaley said goodbye to the jazz and cocktails of cosmopolitan Shanghai in exchange for a career at the Seattle Post

³⁹ Two Chinese sources mention a Japanese guard returning to the site of the Weih sien Camp, with one source merely mentioning that such a visit occurred as apparent evidence of the importance the Weih sien Camp is accorded overseas. See Han Tongwen, *Guangwen xiaopu: 1862-1952* (Qingdao: Shandong xinwen chubanjū, 1993), pg 11. The other source mentions that the visit was in order to "express regret." See Wang Zhanjun, "Huang Anwei yong zhaopian jilu lishi," *Qingdao Huabao/Qingdao Pictorial* Vol. 1 (2002): pg 43.

Office.⁴⁰ In other words, this is not a history of internment that Earl Whaley and his band mates might recognise.

It also might not be a history readily recognised by Armic Balianz. Despite claiming to be a stateless Armenian, Balianz and his family were interned at Weih sien, where Armic nursed a powerful hatred of the guards and endured several beatings, once for stealing a radio and another time for boasting to a guard that he would name his newborn son ‘Arthur,’ after American general Douglas MacArthur.⁴¹

Acts of violence such as these were indeed part of life at Weih sien. As a point of contact between civilians from two warring sides, feelings could run high within the camp, as the preceding two cases show. It is important to note that these were not solitary cases—internee memoirs make occasional references to violence at the hands of the Japanese, most often in the form of slapping, or punishments such as solitary confinement. At the same time, it is important to keep such events in context. Writing after his release as part of an exchange between the Japanese and allied governments in October, 1943, former Weih sien internee William Christian described such incidents as rarely occurring during his time in the camp (from March 1943 until October of the same year), recalling only one instance, when a consular police officer ‘slapped and insulted an

⁴⁰ Paul De Barros, *Jackson Street after Hours: the Roots of Jazz in Seattle* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1993), pg 49.

⁴¹ Joyce Bradbury, *Forgiven but not Forgotten: Memoirs of a Teenage Girl Prisoner of the Japanese in China* (North Ryde, N.S.W: J. Bradbury, 2000), pg 95. The Balianz family later settled in San Francisco, where Armic’s wife, Armen, by then divorced from Armic, achieved local fame as the proprietor of the Armenian restaurant *Bali’s* and became a close friend of dissident Soviet ballet superstars Mikhail Barishnikov and Rudolf Nureyev and American filmmaker Philip Kaufman, along with other well-known figures. See Steve Winn, *Armen Balianz-Remembrance from the San Francisco Chronicle*, accessed online on 24th March 2010 at http://www.kitchensisters.org/hidden_kitchens/rice_a_roni_armen_balianz.htm.

American college professor, aged 62,' that he felt was a case of 'studied brutality' and 'without adequate reason.'⁴² Similarly, Langdon Gilkey writes of the preference that the internees' Discipline Committee had for *not* involving the Japanese, instead preferring to deal with various infractions by posting the offender's name and offence in a public place, or, more rarely, revoking privileges in some of the camp facilities.⁴³ Japanese guards and internees came into frequent, albeit limited, contact at Weihsien, through the roll-call, while on patrol through the camp, and in other capacities, as when disposing of rubbish outside the camp walls, but internee memoirs indicate that the results of these interactions were rarely violent.

Instead, this history tells the ways in which the broader internee community coped with the circumstances of internment, often in search of an accommodation to the reality of their situation. In spite of stories like those of Earl Whaley and Armic Balianz, the fact remains that many internees would go on to have remarkably positive feelings towards Weihsien, noting that their camp was perhaps the best internment camp in all of Asia, a place where relations between captor and captive were mostly civil, where children alternately played with their guards, or heckled them. It is also a camp where

⁴² Samuel Sokobin, ed., "Internment of American and Allied Nationals at Weihsien, Shantung Province, China," File 4464-0-40C File Pocket, Vol. 3113, RG 25, Library and Archives Canada, pg 26-27. The Sokobin report was compiled by American Consul Samuel Sokobin and includes lengthy sections written by Weihsien internees H.H. Loucks, William B. Christian, N.A. Gorman, and E.W. Torrey.

⁴³ Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: the Story of Men and Women under Pressure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pg 158. Gilkey writes of a similar reluctance to involve the Japanese on the part of the Housing Committee, see 120-121.

former internees could look back and remark of their captors that at least they “tried to make life comfortable.”⁴⁴

To tell this story, I have positioned Weih sien as a case study of civilian responses to internment. According to Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, the use of a case study can yield particular advantages to the researcher. A case study of internment offers an in-depth look at conditions “on the ground” in the camp that comparative models or ‘surveys’ of the Japanese internment camp system might overlook, thus yielding “a solid empirical basis for specific concepts and generalizations.”⁴⁵ In approaching the Weih sien camp, a case study is justified in part by the rich quantity of research materials available compared to other camps. With the large number of children interned thanks to the presence of the Chefoo School, there have been more opportunities over the years for the details of life in the camp to become available via interviews, memoirs, and amateur histories.

Weih sien also offers a chance to “examine social action in its most complete form,” in the hope of understanding the impact that internees’ beliefs and decisions had on life in the camp. Various sources offering insight into how the internee government functioned, how parents and children experienced internment, and how internees made sense of their time in the camp following their release have become available in recent years. Over the course of the war, food supplies gradually diminished, which in turn led to changes in the

⁴⁴ Servatia, *A Cross in China*, pg 256.

⁴⁵ Joe R. Feagin, Anthony M. Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg, eds. *A Case for the Case Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pg 7.

black market and relations between the internees and their guards, thus making it possible to “recount the effect of decisions over time,” rather than presenting a static image of life in a camp that lasted from March of 1942 until August of 1945.⁴⁶

As descriptive tools to aid in my analysis of Weihsien, I have adopted the concept of accommodation, as used by Philippe Burrin to describe life in occupied France. Burrin writes of the accommodation reached by the vast majority of the French people with their occupiers following the fall of France during the Second World War. Appearing in a variety of forms, accommodation grew out of the points of contact between the occupiers and the occupied that triggered an adjustment to the new occupation environment, and in many cases assumed a structural form—the need of both occupier and the occupied for functioning public services and to avoid the collapse of the economy. In the case of Occupied France, Burrin writes of four conditions that spawned the working accommodation that operated between the occupied French and their German conquerors: (1) the sense of constraint that was created amongst the French population by the German conquest; (2) simple self-interest; (3) personal compliance; and (4) ideological connivance,⁴⁷ all of which were present to varying degrees in the case of France. This situation, Burrin writes, does not exist “purely by dint of constraint; it usually finds some more or less stable and lasting basis in shared interests, and by constructing networks of

⁴⁶ Ibid, pg 8-11.

⁴⁷ Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: New Press, 1996), pg 461.

accommodation that link occupiers and occupied together and make it possible for the machine to continue to operate.”⁴⁸

Needless to say, occupied France is not an ideal stand-in for an internment camp, and a certain amount of tailoring must be done to the concept of accommodation to ensure a proper fit. The internees at Weihsien were not faced with an invading power conquering their territory following victory on the battlefield; rather, they were civilians in a foreign country forcibly shipped to a contained environment of Japanese choosing. Furthermore, they were hardly a uniform body in the sense that an occupied nation might be considered a cohesive unit. Instead, the Weihsien internees represented the old, the young, and the middle aged from a variety of Western nations and a smattering of non-Western nationals, too.⁴⁹ Despite these substantial differences, which acted to constrict the range of choices available to internees far more than those on offer in Occupied France, the internees did share a material self-interest with the Japanese—namely, the smooth operation of the Weihsien Camp. This is not to say that resistance and collaboration did not exist at the camp; as shown in the following pages internees could and did find ways to challenge their captors or curry favour with them. But the interest that the camp community as a whole shared with the Japanese in seeing to it that life in Weihsien unfolded smoothly makes the notion of accommodation useful for demarcating the ways in which internees

⁴⁸ Ibid, pg 460-461.

⁴⁹ While other writers have tended to emphasise the cosmopolitan nature of the camp as a point of pride in discussing the formation of community in the camp, other writers have been less impressed. Firmly tongue-in-cheek, Evelyn Davey Huebener writes simply that “Weihsien is a big camp... mainly composed of queues.” See Evelyn Davey Huebener, personal diary kept during internment, pg 32, copy provided by Christina Spink.

acclimatised to the camp environment, chosen and managed by the Japanese, to create community in internment.

Japanese authorities at the camp ruled over the internees through the creation of a geographically delineated space in which food and heating supplies were controlled, communications in and out largely blocked and daily life regulated by means of roll call. Like the majority in France, who Burrin asserts fell into an uneasy submission to German rule, the majority of the Weihsien internees settled into camp life, actively involved neither in overt acts of resistance nor collaboration with their captors. Without a doubt, the Japanese authorities at Weihsien, untrammelled by any “underground” and unharassed by enemy troops, exerted a degree of control that their German counterparts in France could only dream of, thus making the accommodation reached by internees all the more fascinating.

But despite the primacy of the Japanese, the camp authorities opted to grant internees substantial autonomy in the running of certain aspects of their own affairs. Staffed with fewer than fifty guards and a handful of administrators, the Japanese were tasked with feeding, housing and keeping watch over a population that typically numbered nearly 2,000. As a foreign entity in a rural hinterland of uncertain allegiance, the position of the camp was indeed precarious, and in this light, the story that unfolded with the opening of the camp has a certain amount of logic to it. Under the supervision of their Japanese guards, internees actively sought to create a sense of community and community life

behind barbed wire, thus marking an accommodation to their temporary, though at the time seemingly indefinite, internment.

What turned out to be two-and-a-half years of internment camp life produced a rich historical record. In researching this topic, I have relied on three groups of primary sources: (1) unpublished interment diaries and interview transcripts drawn from various archives in Australia, North America and the United Kingdom; (2), Canadian government documents created from interviews with selected internees following their repatriation in 1943; and (3) Chinese language materials, including a recent collection of media reports on Weih sien and a CCTV documentary of the camp, both spurred on by the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation. In addition, I have been extremely fortunate in being able to supplement these materials with published internee memoirs and through an email discussion list where internees and their relatives or descendants discuss new books or memoirs, plan anniversaries and get-togethers, and compare recollections from their years in the camp. Spanning ten years, the Topica Weih sien list is a valuable record of internee recollections of the camp, made all the richer with personal observation on how life in the camp continued to impact internees long after they were released.

Diaries of internees can be chronologically divided into two groups: (1) those of internees like Howard Galt and George Wilder who were repatriated from the camp on 15th September, 1943, travelling aboard the Japanese vessel *Teia Maru* before transferring to the MV *Gripsholm* in Mormugao, Goa, and (2) those of the internees who remained in the camp until after the end of the war. These diaries, kept and written in

defiance of camp regulations, reveal valuable first-hand glimpses into the lives of internment under the Japanese and are noteworthy for the fact that the Japanese guards and camp authorities appear only occasionally. Rather than atrocity, as could be expected from the diaries of German concentration camp survivors or those who lived through the Rape of Nanjing, internment is instead cast as mostly monotony, captured neatly in the following poem by a Weihsien internee:

“Queues----”

He hated to queue but if he did not in Weihsien Camp
He missed such a lot-
For he queued for his breakfast, his water and tea,
He queud for his porridge just like you and me, [sic]
He qued [sic] for his oil, his fruit and his dates,
He queued for his lunch with containers and plates,
He queued for the clinic on popular days,
He queued for his tickets for concerts and plays,
He queud [sic] for the barber, library and post,
And even had to queue to buy back what he lost,
And so—lights out—when he laid down his head,
‘What a blessing’, he thought,
‘I don’t queue for my bed’.⁵⁰

A set of sources closely related to these diaries are the internee memoirs, formally edited and published after release from the camp and including both works devoted exclusively to camp life⁵¹ and those that were broader, spanning the extent of an individual’s time in China.⁵² These memoirs serve as a valuable supplement to diaries, in

⁵⁰ Laura M. Wheeler, “Intern Days at Civilian Civic Center—Weihsien, Shantung, China,” pg 10, Collection AX 273, Laura M. Wheeler Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries.

⁵¹ See Gilkey’s *Shantung Compound*, GFS Gray’s *Guests of the Emperor: Life as an Internee in Japanese controlled China: Weihsien Camp, China, 1942-1946* (Ely, Cambridgeshire, England: G.F.S. Gray, 1990s), or David Michell’s *A Boy’s War* (Singapore: Overseas Missionary Fellowship: 1988) as examples.

⁵² Patrick Scanlan’s *Stars in the Sky* (Hong Kong: Trappist Publications 1984), Myra Scovel’s *The Chinese Ginger Jars* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), and Raymond J. deJaegher’s *The Enemy Within: an*

part due simply to quantity, but also due to their production outside of the camp. Interestingly, memoirs for the most part reinforce the impression that atrocity was absent from the camp.⁵³ Where internee memoirs carry the drawback of being edited, written after the fact, and often containing less immediacy and occasional error of fact due to memory lapses and bias, diaries from the camp suffer under the cloud of possible censorship. Could internees write freely in a diary that could be seized and used as evidence against them by Japanese guards?

The solution, as much as there is one, is through reading the materials in dialogue with each other. All too often, a story gets distorted in the telling, only part of an incident is recalled, or rumour is reported as fact and vice versa. A case in point concerns an unpublished manuscript prepared by Dorothy Potter. Interned with her husband, James Potter, an employee of the China Maritime Customs Service and their son, Anthony, Dorothy Potter worked in the sewing room of the camp, mending internees' clothes. In her account she writes of the Communist guerrillas that were active in the surrounding areas:

The Japs never succeeded in eliminating them in spite of the several serious attempts to do so. A favourite habit of these guerrillas was to catch the Jap sentries standing asleep against the trees in the camp. Then [sic] would noiselessly climb down from the camp wall where they had been watching in

Eyewitness Account of the Communist Conquest of China (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1952) are examples of this type of work.

⁵³ One internee, writing in 2002, listed the top three causes of hardship at Weih sien as being uncertainty about the future, poor diet, and crowding. Significantly, the Japanese do not make the list. See Mary Payseur, *Under His Wings* (Greenwood, Indiana: OMS International, 2002), pg 67.

the darkness and cut the sentry's throat. It was a terrifying sound at first to those living near the outer wall but we grew hardened and callous in time... We were rather afraid that the Japs would implicate us in these killings but fortunately, they never did.⁵⁴

Potter's account of the attacks, filled with the gore of slit throats and the bravado of growing 'hardened and callous' toward the assaults, was enough to strain the credulity of her future readers. In 2002, participants on the Topica Email Discussion list dedicated to Weih sien clamoured to heap scorn on Potter's account. One writer, a researcher who went on to write a book on the topic of Japan's internment camps, described the anecdote as "utter nonsense and probably the work of an over active imagination,"⁵⁵ while some of the surviving internees who were presented with the passage quoted above described it as "far-fetched"⁵⁶ and "UTTER tripe."⁵⁷

And yet the fact remains that George Gray, an Anglican priest interned along with his family at Weih sien, records a remarkably similar event in his diary. On March 4th, 1945, he writes:

Last night 2 guards are supposed (on pretty good authority) to have been killed, sc. by guerrillas (much shouting and shooting was heard by many

⁵⁴ Dorothy Potter, "Three Stayed There: An Interlude," pg 26, Catalogue Number 11485 01/24/1, Private Papers of D Potter, Imperial War Museum, London.

⁵⁵ Greg Leck, "Weih sien Account," comment on the "*Weih sien Internees (w internees)*" Email Discussion List, Dec 1, 2002 18:17 PST

⁵⁶ Ron Bridge, "Re: Weih sien Account," comment on the on the "*Weih sien Internees (w internees)*" Email Discussion List, Dec 2, 2002 12:35 PST.

⁵⁷ Fred Dreggs, "Re: Weih sien Account," comment on the on the "*Weih sien Internees (w internees)*" Email Discussion List, Dec 1, 2002 21:22 PST

people), and the Japanese today are looking for one guerrilla supposed to be still in the camp: they looked in all our rooms, under beds, etc.—and no-one today can take garbage boxes out to dump. A third guard was missing, but has since been found—he was drunk and asleep. The guardhouse windows this morning are smashed: [*sic*] and a revolver was found by children, thrown away.⁵⁸

It is only by reading further in Gray's diary that the truth of the matter comes out—an entry dated the next week reports that the fracas was actually an alcohol-fuelled brawl between different factions within the Japanese guards.

Discrepancies like the above not only highlight the role of rumour in camp life,⁵⁹ but also more generally the pitfalls that memoir, memory and diary can present. In the Weih sien context, it also reveals the tremendous efforts that parents took to shield their children from certain aspects of camp life, and their success in doing so. Memoirs, diaries and camp reports must be read in conjunction with each other.

Canadian government documents have mainly been culled from International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports prepared by the staff of the Swiss Consulate in Qingdao who, as the Protecting Power, served as ICRC representatives and made occasional inspections of the camp. These reports provide only isolated snapshots of

⁵⁸ Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg 71.

⁵⁹ The room for rumour and distortion was made all the greater by the different languages and backgrounds of individual internees. Sister Mary Servatia recalls being quite curious to hear that one of the priests interned at the camp had the stigmata. It was only after some investigation that she discovered that the priest was simply a member of the Italian Order of the Stigmatines. See Servatia, *A Cross in China*, pg 229.

camp life—V.E. Egger, who visited the camp more often than any other Red Cross representative, produced only six reports on the camp, based on inspections that were carefully regulated by the camp authorities. Since meetings with internees were restricted largely to short discussions with representatives of the internee committee, and always in the presence of the Camp commandant or other guard, the chance of getting a truly unvarnished look at camp life through these files is limited.

Consequently, the Red Cross reports are striking for their blandness. In one 1943 report, written by a Mr. A. Jost, Assistant-Delegate of the ICRC, the camp internees are said to have “looked well and cheerful and expressed their appreciation over the good treatment accorded to them by the Authorities and the kindness of the camp Commandant and other Officers.” Concluding a two day visit that took place on the 9th and 10th of November, Jost appeared sanguine about the amount of heating supplies available to internees, an item that appears as a typical complaint in internee memoirs. “One has the feeling,” Jost writes breezily, “that the locality of the camp is a pleasant and healthy one.”⁶⁰

As to be expected, Chinese-language sources on the camp are both few in number and of a much different nature from those discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The earliest known Chinese account of Weihsien, an article in the popular *China Traveller* magazine that describes the camp’s liberation and provides an overview of daily life in the camp, is in fact simply a translation of an account by William A. Smith, an American artist who

⁶⁰ A. Jost, “CIVIL ASSEMBLY CENTRE AT WEIHSIEN (Shantung Province),” based on a visit on the 9th & 10th of November, 1943; copy produced for the author in response to a request to the ICRC Archives in Geneva, pg 6.

arrived at the camp shortly after the end of the war.⁶¹ Han Tongwen and other authors have provided rough narrations of the Weihsien internees' experiences, but these seem to be based mostly on previously published English language accounts and often describe incidents with such similar phrasing that a certain amount of cross-referencing is almost certainly at work.⁶²

More significantly, Wang Yumin, the Nationalist guerrilla leader who played a key role in sheltering two escaped internees, has reminisced on his wartime experiences in a book-length memoir and a short journal article, providing important albeit limited insight into one of the camp's most dramatic episodes.⁶³ Unfortunately, Wang's work is the exception rather than the norm for most Chinese-language works, which have tended to highlight the hardships of camp life and emphasise the selfless support of nearby Chinese peasants in assisting the internees in their efforts to smuggle food into the camp.

By far the most extensive Chinese-language resource on Weihsien came out of the recent 60th anniversary celebrations of the camp's liberation, marked by a reunion of

⁶¹ William A. Smith, "Zai Weixian jizhongying li" (In Weihsien Concentration Camp), trans. by Zhang Degan. in *China Traveler* (Lvxing zazhi) Vol 20 #10 October 1946, pg 73-76. For the English original, see William A. Smith, "In Weihsien Prison Camp," *Asia and the Americas* July (1946), pg 318-326.

⁶² See Han, *Courtyard of the Happy Way Concentration Camp* (樂道院集中營), in Chinese with bilingual title, copy provided by Leopold Pander; Han, *Guangwen xiaopu*, and Kan Jingkui, Yuxuanjun and Sun Guanghui, "Erzhan shiqi Rijun zai hua suojian zui da waiqiao jizhongying: Weixian Ledaoyuan jizhongying (The Japanese Army's Largest Concentration camp for Foreigners in North China During World War II: A Description of the Ledaoyuan Camp)," *Shishi luekao: Minguo dang'an*, 1998 #3: pg 97-99, among others.

⁶³ In his memoirs of the war, *Kangzhan ba nian*, Wang devotes only a few pages out of three hundred to his contacts with the Weihsien internees, while in his journal article, *Jiaolai hepan*, he omits mention of them entirely despite providing an overview of the region's military situation. See Wang Yumin, *Kangzhan banian* [Eight Years in the War of Resistance against Japan], Taoyuan, Taiwan: s.p., 1974, and Wang Yumin, "Jiaolai hepan [Pigweed River Plain]," *Shandong wenxian* No. 1, Vol. 3 (Dec. 20th, 1975): pg 64-67.

nearly 50 internees from around the world, the publication of a book sponsored by the Weifang City government, the production of a CCTV documentary, and the opening of a private exhibition centre on the former grounds of the camp. Created as the result of close co-operation between Weifang City officials and surviving internees, both the exhibition centre and the commemorative book are important and fascinating testaments to how Weih sien has been interpreted in a public context in China, with much of the material explicitly edited and compiled from overseas sources, in effect offering previously available material in a new format.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to incorporate Japanese records into this project, although such work remains a logical follow-up for future research on Weih sien. Japanese records relating to the Consular Police were originally held with Japan's Foreign Ministry and later moved following the creation of a Ministry of Greater East Asia in 1942. Despite the possibility that material related to the guards would be held in the relevant Japanese archives, Erik Esselstrom, Associate Professor at the University of Vermont, author of *Crossing Empire's Edge: Foreign Ministry Police and Japanese Expansionism in Northeast Asia*, and an expert on Japan's colonial empire, has yet to find any documentary evidence identifying the guards staffing Japan's internment camps,⁶⁵ nor have references to the guards been found in any other known English literature.

⁶⁴ See Weifang Municipal Government, *Flying Peace: to the Memory of the 60th Anniversary of the Victory of the World War II and the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Former Weih sien Concentration Camp* (Jinan, Shandong: Shandong wenyi chubanshe, 2005).

⁶⁵Erik Esselstrom, e-mail message to the author, 27th April 2009.

Equipped with the material described above, I have selected a number of key incidents or interactions that the internees had over the course of their time in the camp as a means to understand how a particular allied community functioned under the jurisdiction of the Japanese. Internees arrived in the camp with a number of pressing needs—organising themselves into a community and obtaining/distributing adequate food supplies became the order of the day as the Weihsieners adapted to their new surroundings. But if food came first on the list of internee needs, communication with the outside world came a close second, and so the rise of the ‘Bamboo Wireless’ was ensured, which in turn was closely linked with the lone escape from Weihsien. Arranged in this way, it is possible to see a clear consistency in how the Weihsien internees, at various critical junctures, chose to respond to the circumstances of their internment.

FROM ‘COURTYARD OF THE HAPPY WAY’ TO ‘WEIHSIEN CAC’

Beginnings

In early 1943, a vast dragnet began sweeping through the whole of Japanese-occupied China. In a roundup that stretched from Shanghai on the Yangtze to Kalgan⁶⁶ in the north, Japanese agents swept through the cities, towns and villages of northern China, tracking down allied nationals and readying them for internment. For many, internment came after months of rumour and speculation, but for some it came as a relative surprise, an intrusion into the artificial calm that had settled over expatriate communities following the Japanese invasion.

⁶⁶ Present-day Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province.

Word of internment conjured up vastly different reactions from different individuals. Some were deeply resistant to the idea—one woman, perhaps attempting to claim immunity to the internment order, or at least preferential treatment, loudly proclaimed herself to be a ‘Hitler Belgian,’ much to the consternation of her fellow internees.⁶⁷ Others took a far different approach. For the Talati family, of Parsee descent, internment proved to be deeply divisive, with the Japanese initially interning James Talati and allowing his wife and daughters to remain free; it was only after much insistence from the Talati women that they be given equal treatment (ie, internment) with the wider British community that the family was finally reunited in Weih sien. “I wanted to be the same as my English friends...I had a British passport...But, you know, actually everyone thought the Talati girls were absolute ‘fools!’” Katy Talati said of the internment order. Katy Talati records that both she and her mother quickly came to regret this decision. “Mother never failed to blame poor old Dad for being the reason for the Japanese change of mind,” Talati writes. “He had absolutely nothing to do with it and, in fact, was totally ignorant of what had happened.”⁶⁸ In contrast to the strain on the Talati marriage, worries about the prospect of internment accelerated Yvonne and Douglas Ridgway’s plans for marriage. Believing that as a married couple, they would be unlikely to be kept apart on account of Douglas’s American nationality and Yvonne’s French nationality, the couple made secret plans to wed, in defiance of her father who felt it was wrong to marry in wartime. The couple’s plan worked, but not without effort; Yvonne arrived in the camp along with the

⁶⁷ Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg 38.

⁶⁸ See Katy Talati with Maria Jaschok and Red Chan, *Katy Talati, Growing Up in Old Peking* (unpublished manuscript provided by Dr Maria Jaschok), pg 90-91.

Italian contingent, roughly nine months after Douglas, and only after persistent efforts with the Japanese authorities in Tianjin.⁶⁹

For Langdon Gilkey, internment at Weih sien began with the arrival of a simple letter. In the interests of safety and comfort, the letter announced, enemy nationals were to be sent by train to a “Civil Assembly Center” near the village of Weih sien in Shandong Province.⁷⁰ Perhaps reflective of the lack of Japanese co-ordination for the internment of expatriate staff at Yenching University, Gilkey’s letter came near the end of February, 1943 and drew to a close a period in which rumours of pending internment had swept through the once brash community of Western expatriates in Beijing.

With the 7th December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour, the United States had entered the war and the foreign academic community at Yenching, as elsewhere, entered a period of strain and uncertainty. Japanese forces in Beijing acted quickly following the attack—classes had been suspended, students sent home and foreign faculty confined to the South Compound of the campus within the next two days.⁷¹ Alice Boring, also a faculty member at Yenching, was re-housed for her remaining time in Beijing with Martha Kramer and another woman in a comfortable three-storey home near to friends and acquaintances. Under the watchful eye of the Japanese, who instituted a pass-system for trips away from the campus’s South Compound and into the city centre, the Yenching

⁶⁹ See Louise Rafkin, “An Around-the-World, 66-year Love Story” San Francisco Chronicle, 26 April 2009, accessed at http://articles.sfgate.com/2009-04-26/living/17192818_1_douglas-hunger-strike-marry on 7th September 2010.

⁷⁰ Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*, pg 1.

⁷¹ Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie and Clifford J. Choquette, *A Dame Full of Vim and Vigor: A Biography of Alice Middleton Boring; Biologist in China* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1999), pg 150.

faculty settled in for what would be several months of enforced inactivity, permitted to travel within a six kilometre radius around the campus and no further.⁷²

But despite the seemingly interminable lull following the outbreak of war, plans for the expatriate community were already in motion, although the end result of internment was not necessarily apparent. GFS Gray quotes an unnamed Japanese official on the likelihood of Western civilians being interned as of 6th December, 1942: “Why should we intern them? Peking is one big internment camp already.” Gray attributes the conflicting rumours of internment due to competition over jurisdiction between the Japanese military and the Consular Service.⁷³ But it is also possible that the Japanese needed a period of transition to allow for the smooth take over of various allied business operations, since immediate, wholesale internment of Western civilians would effectively decapitate many of the businesses that were of interest to the Japanese.⁷⁴

In any event, the notice of internment reached other Yenching faculty members by early February 1943. Varying instructions were given as to what could be brought to the camp; Gilkey’s group brought a bed and a single steamer trunk, while Boring’s luggage allowance included two trunks.⁷⁵ As per Japanese instructions, on the 25th of March, 1943 Gilkey, Boring and other faculty members of Yenching gathered at the grounds of

⁷² Ibid, pg 150 and 152.

⁷³ Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg 9 and 12.

⁷⁴ For a description of one such transition, see the diaries of E.J. Nathan, a manager with the Kailan Mining Administration for the months leading up to internment. *Papers of E.J. Nathan*, MS. Eng. Hist.e 224 (fols. 1-45) and MS. Eng. Hist.g 20 (fols. 32r-70v), Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁷⁵ Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg 155.

the former American Embassy in Beijing where they were joined by a veritable cross-section of the allied community in Beijing. Wealthy socialites joined Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Respected businesspeople from large, international trading firms, doctors and other professionals represented the cream of expatriate society, while gritty ex-marines, labourers and the odd prostitute or drug addict rounded out the crowd. Some had chosen to remain in China despite the risks of war; others, like the elderly Edith Molesworth, visiting a cousin who worked as a nurse at Peking Union Medical College, were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time when the Japanese cast their dragnet across occupied China.⁷⁶

Among the crowd were some who had taken the blandishments of the Japanese letter seriously, packing up golf clubs and other assorted gear, and had arrived at the embassy grounds trailed by a small procession of cases and trunks. Japanese orders soon dispelled any notion of country club amenities that remained amongst those crowded onto the Embassy grounds; everyone was to carry their luggage by hand to the railway station. Over the course of the hour-long march, filled with much tugging, dragging and pulling of trunks, some fainted, while one internee died from what was likely a heart attack. “The era of Western dominance in Asia,” Gilkey observed, “ended with that burdened crawl to the station.”⁷⁷

Further south in Yantai, a small city on the northern coast of Shandong, a different scene was to take place. Since 1880, missionaries had sent their children to the small

⁷⁶ Leck, *Captives of Empire*, pg 672.

⁷⁷ Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*, pg 3, and Ogilvie, *A Dame Full of Vigour and Vim*, pg 156.

coastal city of Yantai to be boarded at the Chefoo School. Managed by the China Inland Mission (CIM), the Chefoo School was staffed by and served mainly British and Americans, and had a population of over 200 students and staff. With the arrival of a Japanese presence on the Chefoo campus almost immediately following Pearl Harbour, life at the school was inevitably disrupted.⁷⁸ The school's local staff members were dismissed to cut back on expenses, funding from the CIM headquarters in Shanghai was blocked, and the older students began to take part in general campus maintenance duties.⁷⁹

Chefoo School Principal P.A. Bruce, along with several other leading figures in Yantai's compact expatriate society, was taken away by Japanese troops for extensive questioning, and the process of seizing individual school buildings commenced. Internment was to take place in two phases. On 5th November 1942, the staff and students were marched to Temple Hill, some two miles inland and formerly the site of an American Presbyterian mission.⁸⁰ Cramped, crowded and divided into several tiny compounds, the staff and students were to spend until 7th September 1943 interned at Temple Hill⁸¹ before setting out for Weihsien as part of a Japanese effort to consolidate

⁷⁸ As enemy nationals, Chefoo staff and students were made to wear lettered armbands identifying themselves by nationality (*A* for American, *B* for British, etc.) and were required to present passes to Japanese guards on entering or leaving the Chefoo campus. See Martha Philips and Mary Hadden, *Behind Stone Walls and Barbed Wire* (Los Angeles: Bible Memory Association, 1991), pg 80.

⁷⁹ J.W.G. Bruce, "Birds in the Fowler's Nest: The Story of a Japanese Internment Camp," pg 4, printed manuscript provided by Bob McKnight.

⁸⁰ Michell, *A Boy's War*, pg 36. The American Presbyterians had evacuated their staff from Temple Hill prior to Pearl Harbour. See Jennie Kingston Fitzwilliam Transcript, interviewed by Paul Ericksen, 12 July 1984, collection 272 T4, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Illinois.

⁸¹ The Temple Hill Camp was a series of houses built for American Presbyterian missionaries on the outskirts of Chefoo (present-day Yantai).

the many smaller camps that had been established in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbour.

Unlike the other groups from Beijing and Tianjin, the Chefoo students travelled by steamer, rounding the Shandong peninsula and arriving at Qingdao after two days and two nights on ship with only what they could carry for food, and then travelled on to Weih sien in the interior by train. In spite of the inconvenience of being forced to relocate to a second camp, the students and staff of Chefoo were fortunate to be arriving at Weih sien some six months after the camp had opened, for by then most of the mechanisms for feeding and housing so large a community were already in place.⁸²

Arrival of the Japanese

Despite having been a long-established American Presbyterian mission compound, by 1943 conditions were so poor that the camp was a mere shadow of its former glory. The grounds of the ‘Courtyard of the Happy Way,’ as Weih sien had been known in its mission days,⁸³ had contained the Shadyside Hospital, complete with operating theatres, a large Edwardian church, classroom buildings, and housing for both missionaries and local students and staff. As a symbol of the Western presence in China, the compound had come under Japanese scrutiny following the occupation of Shandong.

⁸² Gordon Martin, *Chefoo School 1881-1951* (Braunton, UK: Merlin, 1990), pg 114.

⁸³ The name 1èd àoyu àn (樂道院) is taken from the sign that hung above the main gate to the compound and was typically rendered in English by the internees as the Courtyard of the Happy Way. As the eponymous name for one of Norman Cliff’s most well-known books and a commonly-occurring phrase in numerous internee memoirs and paintings, the ‘Courtyard of the Happy Way’ has become an easily recognised alternate name for the Weih sien Camp. See Appendix A: Images, Figure 14.

From January of 1941, Japanese military police operated in the area in conjunction with puppet Chinese forces, often terrorising the local population. In one incident, a Japanese officer is reported to have sexually assaulted a Chinese nursing student, Wei Xifang (魏希芳), and subsequently imprisoned her in the home of a local resident where he repeated his attacks.⁸⁴ Systematic looting during this period also reduced many of the buildings to shells, with the medical equipment, furnishings and even piping being torn from the walls or reduced to scrap.

Ruth Brack, a nurse at Shadyside when the United States entered the war, described the encroachment of the Japanese in terms similar to the occupation of various other foreign properties that was going on elsewhere in China. Having just left chapel on the morning of December 8th, Brack was walking across the grounds to the hospital to start her shift. “Before you could say Jack Robinson,” she writes, “the place was swarming with Japs, the gate closed and no one allowed in or out.” Having secured the compound, Japanese troops initially removed anything falling under the category of “printing machines and means of transportation,” before sending in an officer and interpreter to demand a detailed inventory of all mission and personal property. Such was the thoroughness of the Japanese that this included confiscating the scooter of a young boy,

⁸⁴ See Han, *Guangwen xiaopu*, pg 94-95 and Deng, *Bai nian cang sang Ledaoyuan*, pg 78. It is important to note that neither author provides adequate citations in their works, and that Deng includes a brief note of thanks to Han for providing ‘historical materials’ at the close of his own work.

Charles, thereby eliminating the possibility of any of the missionaries pushing madly across the Shandong plains in a desperate bid for freedom.⁸⁵

For the next six months, frequent return visits from the Japanese authorities and a raid from local bandits steadily stripped the compound of anything of value. Despite the increasing roadblocks imposed by the war, the mission continued to play a role in local health, dispensing typhoid shots and providing increasingly basic levels of care as the war ground on.⁸⁶ On March 4th, a particularly large raid took place, and Japanese troops packed up much of the equipment in the operating theatres and the obstetrics and gynaecology departments. Brack came upon one Japanese officer demanding even the stethoscopes from around the mission doctors' necks, a demand which Brack balked at, insisting that they were private property rather than hospital equipment. Noting that there were five, the officer relented: "You keep two and give me three." He then handed them back with elaborate flourish and a wide grin, proclaiming to Brack, "The Spirit of Meiji!" as he did so.⁸⁷

In mid-June 1942, Brack and the remaining missionaries were forced to abandon the hospital, leaving any remaining personal effects and equipment they could not take with them in Japanese hands. By the time the compound re-opened as an internment camp at the end of March, 1943, Shadyside Hospital and the other buildings had first been

⁸⁵ Ruth A. Brack, "Weihsien Shangtung, Province China: December 8, 1941-June 5 1942," pg 1-2, Box 28, Folder 1, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection (Record Group #8), Divinity Library Special Collections, Yale University, New Haven.

⁸⁶ Ibid, pg 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pg 9.

through the systematic looting of the Japanese and then been stripped by local bandits who removed any remaining piping and other scrap material.⁸⁸

The Internees

Information on the internee population at Weih sien is drawn from a roster prepared by Ron Bridge, historian for the Association of British Civilian Internees Far Eastern Region (ABCIFER).⁸⁹ Held at Weih sien as a boy, Bridge spent time after the war conducting research using materials obtained from the Swiss government, archives in Japan and other internees. The resulting roster, totalling 2011 internees (of whom at least 25 were born in the camp), includes last name and first initial or full name, nationality, date of birth, gender, profession, and other data for the Weih sien internees, as well as date of arrival or departure for certain groups. Despite the large amount of information available on the roster, some omissions remain, ranging from personal data on an individual, to some individuals who are omitted from the list entirely (Alice Boring and Augusta Wagner, both of Yenching University, being obvious examples), therefore making it impossible to compile precise statistics.

As a basic sketch of the Weih sien internees, the roster provides important insight into the camp population. In thinking about the Weih sien Camp population it is important to bear in mind that the population of the camp was far from static, meaning that the data can therefore be used in two ways. First, it is possible to get an overall look at the total

⁸⁸ One source describes conditions in the camp as “appallingly filthy.” See Arch R. Wiggins, *Campaigning in Captivity: Salvationist 'ambassadors in Bonds' During the Second World War* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, Ltd., 1947), pg 70.

⁸⁹ All figures in the following section are based on those recorded in this document unless otherwise stated.

number of people who passed through the gates of Weihsien to get a more general sense of the range of people impacted by the Japanese internment order. Second, the numbers can be used to get snapshots of how the camp population would have appeared at any given time during the course of internment.

There were four significant changes to the camp population over the course of internment: (1) the 15th September 1943 departure of 86 Americans, 6 Canadians and one additional individual (nationality unrecorded; presumably American or Canadian) via the *Teia Maru* to Mormugao and then on to Canada and the United States aboard the MV *Gripsholm* as part of an exchange between the US and Japanese governments; (2) the departure of the 312 Catholic nuns and priests on 16th August 1943 for holding in various mission compounds in Beijing; (3) the arrival of the CIM Chefoo School on 9th September 1943 from nearby Yantai; and (4) the arrival of the 107-strong Italian contingent on 30th December 1943 in the wake of Italy's surrender to the Allies in September of that year.⁹⁰ In light of this, it is possible to make a rough division of the camp's population into two periods, using the end of 1943 as the dividing point on the grounds that the arrival of the Italians marked the last major movement into or out of the camp.

⁹⁰ The Italians were initially held separately from the other internees but within the Weihsien Camp compound, with restrictions on interaction between them and everyone else breaking down only gradually after their arrival. No information is available on their experience within the camp.

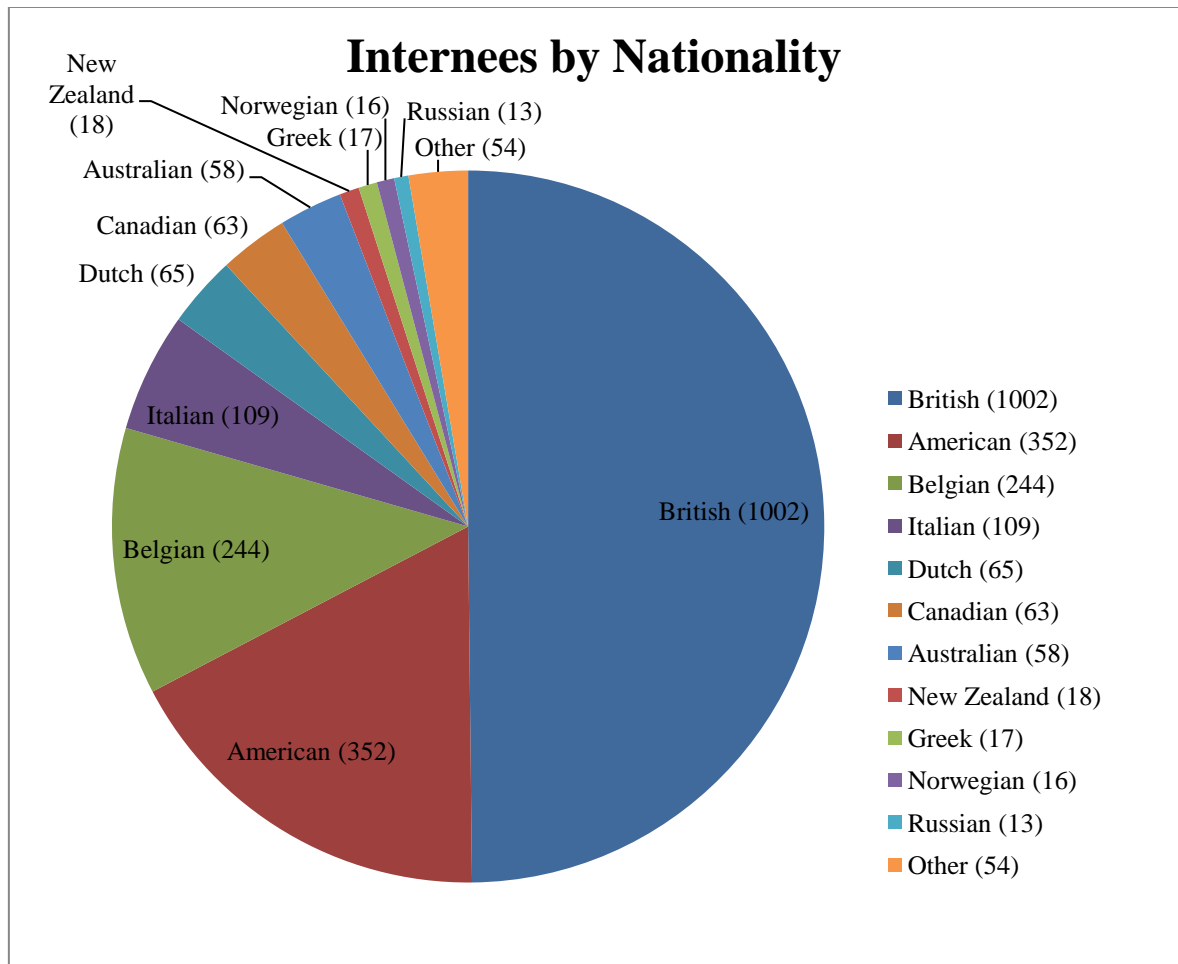


Figure 5: Internees by Nationality

In terms of a general snapshot, Weihsien was a remarkably diverse place, with twenty-six different nationalities represented at one time or another within the camp. The remaining 54 internees indicated in the chart below as “Other” the chart below included internees of unknown nationality (11), as well as Chinese (1), Cubans (7), Filipino (3), Finnish (1), French (1), German (1), Indian (2), Iranian (9), Maltese (1), Palestinian (9), Panamanian (2), Polish (1), South African (3), and Tartar (1) internees. Yvonne Ridgway (nee Samarq) a Frenchwoman married to American Douglas Ridgway, explains the presence of some in the camp whose countries were not actually at war with Japan as a matter of family unification. “We wanted to join our husbands,” she recalled simply,

noting she had to plead her case at the Swiss consulate for six months before gaining permission to enter Weih sien.⁹¹

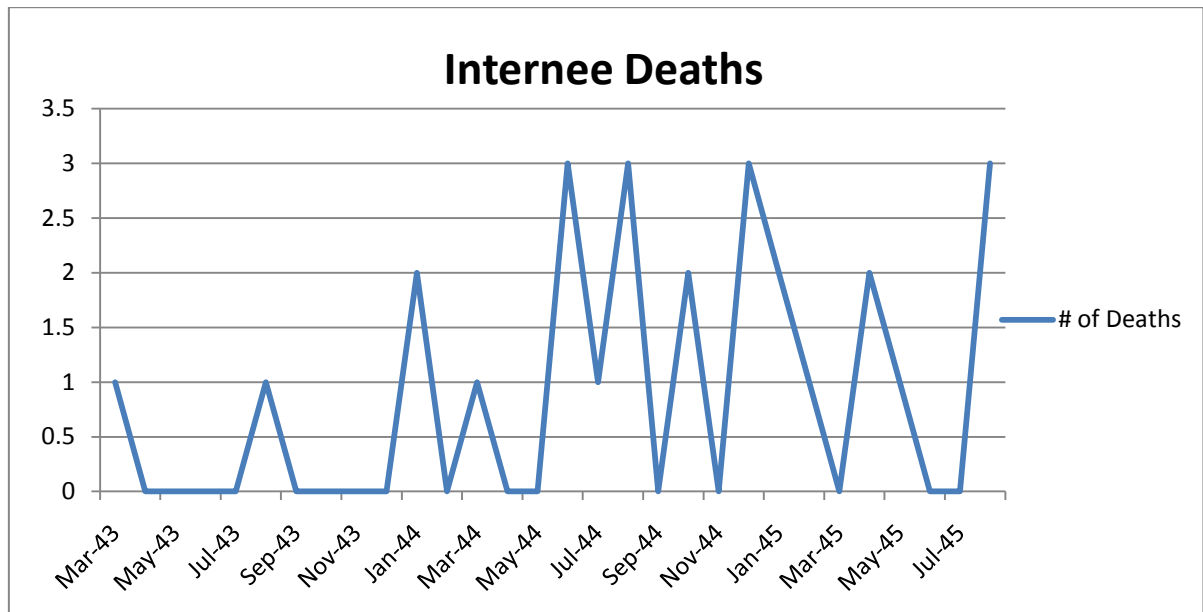


Figure 6: Internee Deaths

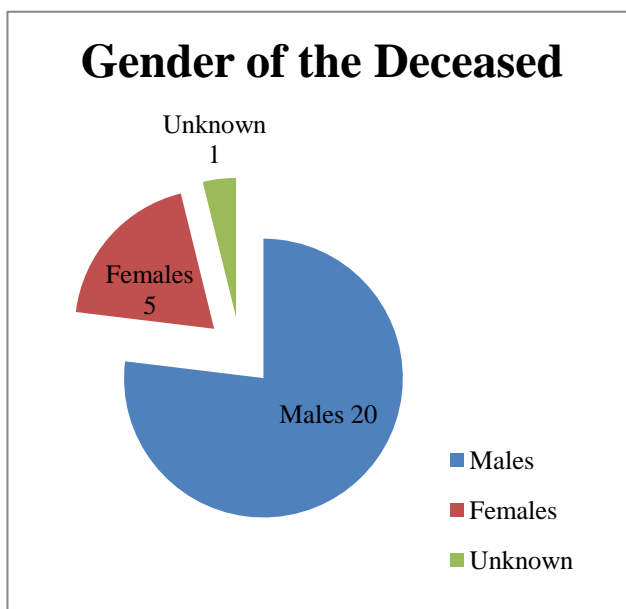
Weih sien held slightly more males than females, with 1017 males and 993 females listed as being held in the camp. The 2011th person on the list was the child of two Britons, Bill and Winifred Chilton, born in March of 1945 and deceased on 10th April 1945, with gender unrecorded.⁹² The column for deaths at Weih sien, only 26 in total, paints a grim picture of some of the hard realities of life in an internment camp. With three recorded in several of the colder months each during the winter of 1943/44 and another jump in August, 1945, mere days before the arrival of American paratroopers at the camp., it is possible to see a trend that coincided with the deteriorating conditions within the camp that will be narrated in the pages that follow. The hardship of internment

⁹¹ Center for Internee Rights, ed., *Civilian Prisoners of the Japanese in the Philippine Islands: Years of Hardship, Hunger, and Hope: January 1942-February 1945* (Paducah, Kentucky: Turner, 2002), pg 60.

⁹² Information on specific deaths is provided later in the thesis on the basis of available information; all other deaths are presumed to be due to natural causes in the absence of evidence to the contrary in internee memoirs and other sources.

fell heavily on the old, with 13 of the deceased 60 years of age or older and only four aged 21 or less, two of whom were only a few months old. Average age of the deceased was 54.

Also significant is the high number of deaths amongst interned men compared with women in the camp. A full twenty deaths are recorded for the males versus only five for



the females, far out of proportion for the gender ratio within the camp, with this deviation possibly on account of an equal allowance of food provided to internees and a traditionally Western division of labour along gender lines, common to the era, that saw men doing a greater share of manual labour, with the exception of laundry, done by hand or washboard, than women in the

Figure 7: Gender of Deceased Internees

camp. Sketches from the notebook of internee Marie Regier show internee women working over wash basins, or list the all-female staff of the “Sewing Advisory Group,” designed to help lighten the burden women had for “sewing for men and children,” while more physically intensive jobs like pumping water, even for the women’s showers, were typically done by men.⁹³

⁹³ Marie J. Regier, “Wash Day in Hot Weather” and “A Poster,” Box 3 Folder 41 Sketches—Internment Camp 1943-1945, Marie J. Regier Frantz Janzen Papers, Manuscript Collections, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, and P. Bazire and J. Taylor, “1st Class Journey,” journal kept for Scouts, http://www.weihhsien-paintings.org/PeterBazire/ScoutBadge/txt_BoyScoutBadge.htm, accessed on 11th September 2010.

Following the transfers that took place in and out of the camp in 1943, the composition of the camp was appeared quite different. Now numbering 1571 internees, males now were outnumbered by females with the camp holding 773 males and 798 females. Communities affected by the transfers were the Americans (now numbering (183), Australians (57), Belgians (51), British (984), Canadians (43) and Dutch (33), all of whom saw numerous internees leave the camp. Also departing was Weihsien's lone Maltese woman, Miss Olga Gera, member of the Holy Ghost Convent, who was transferred out along with the Catholic contingent.

Over the total course of internment, Weihsien held a total of 483 minor internees, here defined as anyone below the age of 18 as of 1st March 1943, for a total of roughly 24% of the total internee population.⁹⁴ 86 of these minors appear to have been in the camp without an adult of the same last name and nationality (ie., a parent or adult relative) accompanying them. The total number of minor internees fluctuated with the departure over the course of 1943 of 25 minors, 7 to other camps and the remainder as part of the 15th September evacuation of American and Canadian internees, as well as the arrival of 28 Italian minors on 30th December 1943 (and an additional Italian birth in July 1944).

The profession of individual internees is often included, with a wide range of occupations listed—everything from housewife to lighthouse keeper, trombone player to the bank manager. Langdon Gilkey, whose involvement with the camp housing committee gave him an unusually thorough knowledge of the Weihsien's population,

⁹⁴ This should, as with all other figures, be taken as an approximation due to the fact that some of the dates of birth for internees include only the year of birth and a very small minority of listings provide no clue as to age.

estimated the number of Protestant missionaries as being 400—a figure not relatively apparent from the lists on account of male missionaries' wives, often active missionaries themselves, being listed as housewives, as was overwhelmingly the case. The CIM Chefoo School contingent number approximately 200, also by Gilkey's reckoning.⁹⁵

Weihhsien Works

Following their arrival at the camp, many internees were confronted with the harsh realities of their new circumstances. Gone were the many privileges (often including servants and staff) that had been so characteristic of expatriate life in treaty port China. Gone were the letters from home, the funds and the imported goods that had acted to soften the distance from home. From the start, internees were faced with the challenges of providing food, housing, and medical facilities for nearly 2,000 people, not to mention latrines. Internees were also tasked with establishing self-government in the form of nine committees that would administer various aspects of life in the camp.

Largely self-selected in the initial months of internment, each committee was overseen by a Japanese liaison and had an internee chair and several committee members. Japanese administration of the camp remains unclear, due to the lack of real interaction between guard and internee, with the exception of the daily role call, a limited form of contact at best. Internee sources offer a wide range of names for the same position—including Nakanishi, Yoshinada, and Koyanagi (also Koyanage) for Chief of Police, and Tsukigawa (also Sukigawa) or Izu for Camp Commandant, although spellings vary

⁹⁵ Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*, pg 21-22.

slightly and kanji do not appear, which further highlights the separation between captor and captive. At the time of the camp's liberation, the Commandant is recorded as Izu and the Chief of Police as Koyanagi.⁹⁶ Among the internee committee members, responsibilities were divided among nine different departments, including Finance, Engineering, Medicine, Quarters, Food Supplies, Education, Labour, Discipline, and General Affairs.⁹⁷ Membership in Weihsien's grandly-named 'Committee of Nine,' consisting of the internee chairs of each department, was later decided through elections held twice yearly, with few internees showing interest in taking up what was widely viewed as a thankless task.⁹⁸

Despite the presence of a Japanese overseer in each of these departments, in many cases, as in Labour, Education, and others, internees were largely left to their own devices. It is important to note, in the case of the labour committee, that there is no reason to suppose the internees provided labour for their guards; on the contrary, in one case, following the collapse of a wall in the camp, they explicitly refused to provide labour for

⁹⁶ William G. Norwood, *Chronological Report on Duck Mission*, 7th September 1945, pg 4.

⁹⁷ Nathan Walton describes his work as a member of the General Affairs Committee in simple terms: "I moved around...from canteen to shoe shop to library, putting in a nail here for the ladies in the sewing room, or scrounging a box from the rear of the canteen to make additional shoe shelves for our industrious and capable Flemish Catholic shoe repairers." Lorna Whipple Black, *Heritage of Faith: a Chronicle of the Otis and Julia Whipple Family*, 2nd edition, (Enumclaw, Washington: Pleasant Word, 2006) pg 529. Langdon Gilkey, who served on the Quarters Committee, notes that "General Affairs" was a mistranslation that stuck—the more accurate title being "Miscellaneous Affairs." See Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*, pg 33.

⁹⁸ An election results notice from the camp election in November, 1944 indicates that eight of the nine committees went uncontested, with only 'Food Supplies' being contested by two candidates. See Weihsien Camp Committee, 'General Elections for Camp Committees,' pg 1. Copy provided by Leopold Pander.

repair work, deeming that aspect of camp maintenance an exclusively Japanese responsibility.⁹⁹

Perhaps according to Japanese design, there was no single position of executive authority; rather, the dominant figures that were to emerge did so through force of personality. These figures, with Ted McLaren on the Discipline Committee chief among them, were able to maintain “camp spirit” and “control” through what internee John David Hayes, in a comment that revealed surprising self-confidence and more than a touch of pride, called the “Anglo-Saxon genius for democratic organization and colonial expansion.”¹⁰⁰

While personality of individual leaders was one factor that undoubtedly shaped camp life, pre-existing communities from pre-internment life also continued to play a significant role in the way camp life evolved. These ‘imported’ social organizations were based on faith, occupation, or location, and included bodies like the CIM Chefoo School, the Salvation Army, Yenching University, and various business groups. Kitchens were initially organised along geographic lines, (Beijing, Qingdao and Tianjin), while use of ‘public’ facilities occasionally became a point of contention as numerous different Catholic and Protestant groups vied for time in the camp’s church on Sundays. More

⁹⁹ Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg 20-21.

¹⁰⁰ John David Hayes, Untitled typescript document describing period of Weih sien internment, Record Group No. 127, box 1, folder 6, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library. David Hayes was not the only internee to think in terms of colonial administration at Weih sien; Lucius C. Porter, who occupied a seat on the camp’s discipline committee, also referred to the camp community as a colony. See Jay Connell, “Tells of Life in Civilian Prison Camp in North China,” *Boston Sunday Post*, 27th January 1946, pg B-4.

often than not, however, it was through these groupings that internees worked to make life in the camp more tolerable.

The ways in which internees reacted to their new camp environment were to have a twofold effect. In the short term, internees were successful in ameliorating life behind barbed wire. By pragmatically accommodating themselves to the realities of life in an internment camp, internees were able to re-produce some aspects of community life to which had been accustomed to in the treaty ports and mission communities. Many Weih sien internees, having found themselves held captive in an ostensibly Japanese-controlled environment, set out to re-make the camp into a home, however temporary, and used a variety of means, including work and art, to introduce elements of domesticity into the camp.

In the longer term, they also deeply shaped the way in which the Weih sien Camp would be written about and remembered by those who were children in the camp. Mary T. Previte, who spent her early teen years at Weih sien as a Chefoo student, summed up the approach taken by her teachers:

No matter what, our Chefoo Schools teachers insisted on good manners. There is no such thing, they said, as one set of manners for people in the outside world and another set for the concentration camp. You could be eating the most awful-looking glop out of a tin can or a soap dish, but you were to be as refined as the two princesses in Buckingham Palace. Sit up straight. Don't stuff food in your mouth. Don't talk with your mouth full. Keep your voice

down. And don't complain. We were God's representatives in the concentration camp, our teachers said, and God was not represented well by rudeness or grumbling.¹⁰¹

Far from grumbling, the Chefoo students would, for the most part, take such advice to heart, displaying an unflinching resolve to put camp life in the best possible light in later memoirs.

It would be inaccurate, though, to suggest that this positive appraisal came about only as a result of an attitude intolerant of grumbling. As David Michell recalls, the Japanese seemed to view their responsibilities as being limited to making sure there were no escapes, and providing 'adequate' supplies of food and fuel for cooking and heating.¹⁰² Quality of life in the camp, he notes, was dependent largely on the efforts made by internees.¹⁰³ Given such autonomy, the Chefoo staff acted to maintain the rigour of active school life for the children to the greatest extent possible.

For the Chefoo students, this continued routine of school life became an important buffer which acted to screen out both experience and awareness of wartime brutality. Theodore Bazire recalls one of the more unusual ways educational experiences that internment provided, well worth quoting in full:

¹⁰¹ Mary T Previte, "Remember eating gao liang and lu dou for breakfast in Kitchen #1?," comment on the "Weihsien Internees (*w internees*)" Email Discussion List, Jun 11, 2000 12:53 PST.

¹⁰² The Japanese also had some quantities of food available for sale in a canteen that operated in the camp, as well as what one source delicately referred to as "utility paper." See M. Julian Alderson, *Franciscans in Shantung, China, 1929-1948* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: St. Francis Motherhouse, 1980), pg 211.

¹⁰³ Michell, *A Boy's War*, pg 66, and Susie Kelsey, "In a Concentration Camp in China," *The Canadian Nurse* Vol. 40, No. 7 (July 1944), pg 480.

In Weihsien camp...we did not have the apparatus necessary for the practical aspects of Physics or Chemistry, so our science studies had to be restricted to Biology. To complete our studies of Biology, we had to know how frogs grow and what makes them 'work;' to achieve that, we had to dissect frogs to find out. The problem was that we hadn't any frogs. But then came the answer: the skies opened up, down came the rain and up came the frogs—but in the stream *outside* the camp. So we went to the Japanese and explained that we wanted to go and collect frogs in order to cut them up. They thought this was unnecessarily barbaric but, nevertheless, gave us permission to do so. I was one of the frog collectors. Eventually we set off outside the camp. All was going well until, at one point, we had to cross the stream. The Japanese guard had polished his boots and didn't want to get them dirty, so he handed me his rifle, jumped over the stream and beckoned me to follow. I had no wish to cause trouble, so I waded across—through the cool water—holding the rifle above my head. When I got to the other side, I handed the rifle back to the guard—with a grin. When we had finished collecting frogs, we had a lovely swim in the stream watched by all our jealous friends on the top floor of the hospital block.¹⁰⁴

Few incidents can be imagined that surpass this as an example of the goodwill that developed at Weihsien between the internees and their guards.

Similarly, instruction was given for the Oxford Exams, with the understanding that test results would be submitted following the end of the war. Thirty-seven Chefoo students went on to take the exams, with all but three obtaining a passing grade of 'satisfactory' or better.¹⁰⁵ Of those three, two wrote the exams while American planes dropped relief parcels to the camp in August of 1945.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Weihsien Municipal Government, "Speech by Mr Theodore Bazire at Liberation Banquet, Weifang, 17th August 1995," in *Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of VJ Day and the Liberation of the Weihsien Civil Assembly Centre held at Weifang on 17th August 1995*, pg 12. From *China Inland Mission, 1865-1951 [microform]: from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London*. Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications, 2006), reel 26.

¹⁰⁵ Spink, "An Oral History Case Study," pg 104.

¹⁰⁶ Chefoo School, "Oxford Matriculation Exam Results- 1944, 1945," *China Inland Mission, 1865-1951 [microform]: from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London* (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications, 2006), reel 26.

These results, while reflecting well on the students themselves, were also the fruit of constant effort and creativity on the part of teachers to maintain a standard educational curriculum. “Teachers,” writes Hilda Hale, “had nothing to take home except frustration at the school system...as the weeks progressed to months and months to years, it became more and more difficult to meet the required standards. Not only were teachers handicapped by inadequate school supplies but students showed signs of deterioration, particularly in their eyesight.” For many, oral exams became the norm as paper shortages precluded written exams.¹⁰⁷

Apart from academics, though, Chefoo staff also continued in their roles as caregivers to students, struggling to ensure that students were adequately clothed and taken care of. Esther Hess, a CIM missionary interned along with the Chefoo School, highlighted the hardship of providing clothing for so many students at such a young age; some, she notes, grew nearly a foot over the course of their time at Weih sien.¹⁰⁸ Beatrice Lack, a member of the Chefoo staff, recalls approaching the camp commandant to request shoes and material for pants to be made for the students. “These things are luxuries,” came the reply from the commandant. “Our people have no luxuries—you cannot have them either.” Blankets and other spare fabric donated by the other internees were eventually used instead.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Hilda L. Hale, *Indomitably Yours: An Account of My Kaleidoscopic Life: Memoirs of Hilda L. Hale* (Victoria, B.C.: H.L. Hale, 1998), pg 192.

¹⁰⁸ Esther M. Hess, letter from Waterton, Wisconsin, to “Praying Friends,” December 7, 1945, Papers of Esther Marguerite Nowack Hess, Collection 232, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives of the Billy Graham Center (BGC), Wheaton, Illinois.

¹⁰⁹ Beatrice Lack, *In Simple Trust* (Burwood, Australia: 1970s), pg 69.

As surrogate parents, albeit in the quasi-Victorian tradition that permeated prep schools of that era, the Chefoo teachers and staff worked to cushion the hardships of internment through predictable routine and discipline, continued education and, where possible, material comfort. Even students who were not enamoured with Chefoo life acknowledge the strength of such a buffer. “I felt safe,” notes Kathleen Strange Foster. “I never thought anything terrible was going to happen to me. Even with the Japanese going around with fixed bayonets I felt entirely safe.”¹¹⁰

In fact, the Japanese guards, far from representing the scourge of life in the camp, instead only played a peripheral role and, in fact, often appear in internee memoirs only in the context of work. One Japanese guard took advantage of the sewing room managed by the internees to have a uniform mended,¹¹¹ while others seemed more drawn to helping the children in the tasks assigned to them. David Birch recalls, at the age of twelve, trying to dig up a small patch of earth to work as a garden one morning when he was stopped by one of the Japanese guards. Waving in a friendly way, the guard took the mattock from the young boy and proceeded to turn up the ground, finishing the job in the hot sun himself before moving on.¹¹² Dwight Whipple recalls the guards in a similarly friendly light: “One time,” he recalled in a 2004 posting, “my cousin and I sneaked up behind a guard who was sitting on a bench and we knocked off his hat, and then we ran

¹¹⁰ Spink, “An Oral History Case Study, pg 85-87.

¹¹¹ Potter, *Three Stayed There*, pg 28.

¹¹² David Birch, “Re: it was different for the old people,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jan 21, 2004 11:05 PST.

as fast as we could. Of course, he caught up with us but we had the impression that this kind of fun was enjoyed by them as well as us little kids!”¹¹³

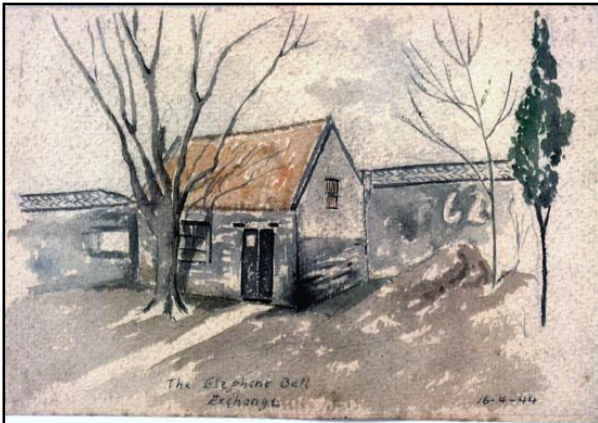


Figure 8: The Elephant Bell Exchange

Other internees benefited from more direct co-operation with their Japanese captors. American businesswoman Helen Burton, who had successfully managed the “Camel’s Bell,” a small curio shop in the *Grand Hotel du Peking*,¹¹⁴ approached internment at Weihsien with surprising

aplomb. Ever the canny entrepreneur, she saw a need in the Weihsien community and promptly appropriated one of the camp buildings for use as a sort of trading post, no mean feat in a crowded camp, and thus created a job for herself and became a resource for her fellow internees.

Operated with the connivance of the Japanese guards, Burton’s new venture, the ‘White Elephant Bell,’ became a popular place for internees to buy and trade food and supplies, much of which was smuggled into the camp via the black market, and was also a favoured gathering place for savouring rare cups of coffee. Some of these items Burton stocked within the shop itself, but the bulk of her wares was listed in catalogues,

¹¹³ Dwight W. Whipple, “Re: Thank you,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Aug. 31, 2004, 6:34 PST.

¹¹⁴ Still in operation today, the *Grand Hotel du Peking* is one of Beijing’s landmarks and has since been partially absorbed into a sprawling hotel complex standing between Tiananmen Square and the Wangfujing shopping district.

in order to facilitate trade between those in the camp that Burton referred to as “the Haves and Have Nots.”¹¹⁵

By providing such a service, Burton directly contributed to alleviating the sense of deprivation that internment entailed. Christine Helsby recalls the “White Elephant Bell” as the source of her family’s Christmas gifts in 1944.¹¹⁶ After sorting through her own meagre possessions, Helsby came up with a small bottle of strawberry jam and borrowed a few dollars from friends, which she gave to Burton in exchange for a copy of *Mathew’s Chinese-English Dictionary* that her missionary husband had admired. She in turn received a small kitchen set that featured a rubber spatula fashioned from a discarded boot heel, a tea strainer made from an old fly-swatter, and a large sardine can that was to enjoy new life as a baking pan.¹¹⁷

Other internees were engaged in work that brought less social contact. Mary Scott scrubbed the latrines, taking over a task previously the exclusive preserve of the Catholics sisters in the camp Built along a trough through which water had to be poured to wash away waste, the latrines were one place the guards were happy to avoid.¹¹⁸ James

¹¹⁵ Grace Tower Warren, “Island Hostess: Helen Burton,” *Paradise of the Pacific* 65, No. 9 (September 1953): pg 13.

¹¹⁶ Christmases at Weih sien were, as could be expected, somewhat bleak affairs, although as the above suggests they did not pass uncelebrated. Another source notes that the Japanese, for Christmas in 1943, donated \$10,000 (currency unspecified) to the internees, taken as profits from the camp canteen, to help mark the occasion. See Gray, *Guests of the Emperor*, pg .31

¹¹⁷ Christine Helsby as told to Ed Erny, “Our POW Christmas,” in *Christmas in My Heart 13*, ed. Joe Wheeler (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1992), pg 80, 82.

¹¹⁸ Mary L. Scott, *Kept in Safeguard: Mary Scott tells the story of her experiences in Old China* (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1977), pg 58. Similarly, Raymond De Jaegher records signing up as ‘Sanitary Patrol Captain,’ knowing that the Japanese avoided the internees latrines and that he would

Bruce, son of Chefoo principal PA Bruce, held a number of jobs, including stoker at the camp hospital and helper at the #1 Kitchen, scrubbing pots and pans and stirring the stew that became a staple in the Weihsien camp diet. These tasks, though no doubt hard work, served to provide structure and regularity to camp life, thus reducing the time that youth and others in the camp could spend worrying about parents and other loved ones or dwelling on the difficult circumstances of camp life.

Camp Cooking

The first message posted on the Topica Email Discussion List in 2000 is a brief missive recalling how meagre the diet at Weihsien was. “We were weed-eaters” declared one internee as she recalled being trained along with other children in the camp to eat pigweed and burdock.¹¹⁹ George Bell, another Chefoo student, recalls the food being the worst part of internment. “It was so bad I lost all my teeth,” he noted some fifty years later in a somewhat sensational article in the *Toronto Star*.¹²⁰

While internee sources from Weihsien remain largely quiet on issues of race, sex and the nature of collaboration with the Japanese, when it comes to the topic of food, the information available is voluminous, a fact reflected by the liberal use of internee voices in this section. Faced with a restricted diet, internees became fixated on food and cast their struggle to improve their diet as an act of resistance against their captors.

therefore be able to contact the ‘lavatory coolies’ without risk of discovery. See De Jaegher, *The Enemy Within*, pg 253.

¹¹⁹ Mary T. Previte, “Remember eating gao liang and lu dou for breakfast in Kitchen #1,” comment on the “Weihsien Internees (*w internees*)” Email Discussion List, Jun 11, 2000 12:53 PDT.

¹²⁰ Judy Steed, “Japanese prison survivors recall childhood terrors,” *Toronto Star*, 9th April, 1995, pg A10.

Supplementing the limited food supplies provided by the Japanese became the most basic and pressing needs for internees at Weihsien, with some internees noting that a conversation in the camp on any topic eventually found its way to the subject of food,¹²¹ to the extent that one internee, in an unusual act of escapism involving food, compiled an entire cookery book featuring dishes like cream puffs, blancmange, and jugged hare, on various bits of whatever paper could be scrounged in the camp.¹²² Among the internees at Weihsien was Martha M. Kramer, who had previously served as the Chairman of the Department of Home Economics at Yenching University and returned to the United States after internment to teach as Professor of Food Economics and Nutrition at Kansas State College. As one of the rare internees able to make direct use of their professional skills in the camp, Kramer worked in the Peking Kitchen preparing food, and used her six months at Weihsien to make a formal study of the internment camp diet.¹²³ Publishing her work after returning to the United States, Kramer presents an expert analysis of the food situation at Weihsien in the first six months.

Surprisingly, Kramer notes that in the first month of record-keeping, May 1943, internees assigned to eat at the Peking kitchen gained an average of one pound. Significantly, Kramer attributed this weight gain to “regular meal hours, regular hours of

¹²¹ Meredith and Christine Helsby, *He Goes Before Them—Even into Prison* (Greenwood, IN: OMS International, 1993), pg 31. .

¹²² Frances Osborne, *Lilla's Feast: A True Story of Love, War and a Passion for Food* (London: Black Swan, 2005), pg 12.

¹²³ It is worth noting at this point that a few internees claimed that certain kitchens provided “better food” than others, although it is hard to establish the impact this had on the overall camp diet. See Kathryn Kuhn, *From Internment to Freedom: by Three Scholars of the C.I.M. Schools, Chefoo, China* (Melbourne: China Inland Mission, 1944), pg 8.

work in the open air and freedom from nervous stimulation characteristic of conditions under which they had been living.”¹²⁴ Statistics for the following months, which record average losses of approximately 1.5 lbs, suggest that the onetime increase was more likely a reflection of the increasing shortages that had affected the North China expatriate communities following the outbreak of hostilities and prior to internment, rather than a testament to the availability of food at Weihsien. “Some internees,” Kramer writes, “were rather relieved to have no further responsibilities for obtaining their own food.”¹²⁵

Kramer writes that the food regularly supplied by the Japanese included white flour, various in-season vegetables available in northern China, low-quality meat from an army abattoir 30 miles from the camp, peanut oil, and some sugar and condiments. More infrequent were deliveries of fish and butter or butter substitutes. About 25-30 gallons of milk per day were available from cows brought into the camp by the Japanese, but only for distribution through the camp hospital.¹²⁶ Bread, rather than rice, became one of the camp staples, baked by the internees following several internee experiments in producing yeast on site.¹²⁷ A letter from the Camp Discipline Office in 1945 indicates that, despite

¹²⁴ Martha M. Kramer, “Internment Camp Food in Occupied China,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 20 (April 1944): pg 215, and “Internees lost little weight on rough Japanese diet, were hungry but healthy, K-State professor declares,” *Kansas Industrialist*, 27th April 1944, pg 1.

¹²⁵ Kramer, “Internment Camp Food,” pg 213.

¹²⁶ Harry D. Hollingsworth, “Roberts H. Jernigan Talks of 21 Months in Jap Hands,” *Gates County Index*, 22nd December 1943, pg 12, and Kramer, “Internment Camp Food,” pg 214.

¹²⁷ Catherine Stirewalt describes the bread as “heavy and tasteless,” and suspected the flour used to make it must have contained some kind of “filler.” See Catherine A. Stirewalt, Baltimore, letter “To Whom it may concern,” 1993, photocopy from Box 4, Miscellaneous Folders, the Stirewalt Family Papers 1830s-1993, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, pg 4.

the limited supplies, many internees found the bread supplied by the camp to be so unpalatable that they burned it in stoves or otherwise disposed of it.¹²⁸

The nutritional value of food supplies at Weihsien was reduced, according to Kramer, by poor storage facilities and transportation, resulting in food spoilage, and what Kramer euphemistically calls “Mistaken notions of a bargain,” meaning the purchase of meat and vegetables at reduced prices on account of their being near the point of total rot.¹²⁹ Other internees also claim that the Japanese storekeeper not infrequently withheld food from internees until rotting set in,¹³⁰ although one source suggests that the food situation outside of the camp may, in fact, have been worse.¹³¹

A report prepared by the Canadian Department of External Affairs compiled from questionnaires answered by Canadians repatriated from Weihsien on the *MV Gripsholm* in December, 1943 largely echoes Kramer’s assessment, albeit in more general terms: “Insufficient fats, proteins and vitamins,” vegetables “of the coarsest varieties, frequently those reserved for animal food; often they were rotting.” Additionally, Weihsien’s

¹²⁸ “Notice to Wardens” 12th June 1945 from the Discipline Office, Lucius C. Porter Papers, Beloit College Archives, Beloit College.

¹²⁹ Kramer, “Internment Camp Food,,” pg 213.

¹³⁰ “The meat wasn’t well-preserved,” former internee Diana Linley states. “It would have lots of flies on it.” See Garthia Elena Halbert, “Columbus woman recalls WWII captivity in Japanese-run camp,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 17 June 2006. See also Bob and Joyce Bradbury, “Re: Opinions,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jun 29, 2005 19:29 PDT, and Sokobin, “Internment of American and Allied Nationals at Weihsien, Shantung Province, China,” pg 9.

¹³¹ Connie Ong, *Letta in China (Great is thy Faithfulness)*, (Xulon Press, 2006), pg 151.

remoteness from major centres made the camp difficult to supply in bad weather, leading to irregularly scheduled food shipments.¹³²

Lacking in quality and quantity, food supplies were, from a nutritional standpoint, rendered further inadequate by the insistence of the camp medical committee, wary of outbreaks of dysentery due to poor sanitation, that no foods be served raw.¹³³ A separate report on the camp indicates that sanitation conditions were poor, due to small septic tanks that were liable to overflow, and that the Japanese authorities themselves recognised that water from many of the shallow wells on the camp were “unfit for drinking even after boiling,” thus making the risk of dysentery apparent.¹³⁴ Kramer also describes internees’ “old-fashioned notions” about vegetables that required they be “routinely submitted to boiling or simmering, often for extended periods of time,” by the kitchen staff, thus reducing their nutrient value.¹³⁵

For the vast majority of internees, this diet meant a steady loss of weight over the course of their internment, although some managed to offset this in the initial months by bringing in a small store of supplies along with their luggage. Arthur Wright became the object of envy among some of his neighbours in the camp after word got out that he had

¹³² Department of External Affairs, “Gripsholm Repatriates Report No. A.3.: Report on Internment Conditions in the Far East Compiled from Questionnaires Answered by Canadian Nationals Repatriated in December, 1943,” File 4464-0-40C File Pocket, Vol. 3113, RG 25, Library and Archives Canada.

¹³³ Internee Ron Bridge recalls catching houseflies in exchange for a square of chocolate from Red Cross parcels as part of attempts to prevent disease outbreaks in the camp. See Adrian Lee, “Torture, starvation and the hell of Japan’s concentration camps,” *The Daily Express*, 21st April 2009.

¹³⁴ Department of External Affairs, “Weihsien Civil Assembly Center,” Report No. A3, pg1.

¹³⁵ Kramer, “Internment Camp Food,” pg 213.

made arrangements, apparently on the grounds of “health,” to have a side of bacon shipped to him once per month from Tianjin.¹³⁶

Children in the camp, however, came in for special attention when it came to diet, both from the rest of the internee community and even from the guards. Internees writing on Topica today still recall the hated taste and texture of the ground eggshell concoction that most children in the camp were forced to take out of concern that the regular camp diet lacked sufficient calcium in particular. Similarly, Roberts Jernigan recalls the difficulty with which he portioned out the camp’s precious milk supplies to the large number of child internees, a practice that was largely curtailed following the arrival of the Chefoo students in the camp.¹³⁷

More surprising is the occasional gift of candies and fruit that the Japanese guards took it upon themselves to bestow to children in the camp, actions that have been alternately attributed to a “Japanese love for children” or nothing more than mere propaganda. In a passage that brings to vivid life the different ways in which young and old experienced internment, Myra Scovel writes of the afternoon her child vanished from the camp: “the whole camp was alerted...Then, just before dusk, he was discovered leaving the Japanese Commandant’s headquarters with an apple in his hand. He had had a wonderful day. The officers had taken him home with them and had shown him a cow

¹³⁶ Internee Elizabeth Huff bases this on the fact that Richard Irwin, a fellow internee, had grumbled over Wright’s borrowing his carving knife and returning it having neither washed it nor offered a share of the bacon. See Rosemary Levenson and Elizabeth Huff, *Elizabeth Huff, Teacher and Founding Curator of the East Asiatic Library: From Urbana to Berkeley by Way of Peking : an Interview* (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, University of California, Regional Oral History Office, 1977), pg 122.

¹³⁷ Harry D. Hollingsworth, “Roberts H. Jernigan Talks of 21 Months in Jap Hands,” *Gates County Index*, 22nd December 1943, pg 12.

and the new puppies and had given him candy and this apple and—“Mummy, you’re crying. What’s the matter?””¹³⁸ Similarly, John David Hayes writes of a departing Japanese camp official who made a gift of “sweets and cokies” [*sic*] to the camp children as a goodwill gesture.¹³⁹

These gestures notwithstanding, internee memoirs and diaries make clear that the diet at Weih sien was poor from the outset and deteriorated over the course of the war.¹⁴⁰ Faced with the necessity of securing adequate nourishment, it can come as no great surprise that the internees looked beyond the camp kitchens and the small, Japanese-run canteen to the Chinese community that surrounded the camp.

The Black Market

While the meagre, nutrient-poor diet provided by the Japanese became the fuel that fed a bustling black market trade in goods “over the wall” with nearby Chinese farmers, strictly speaking, nutrition was not the only thing that the Weih sien internees were concerned with. Stanley Fairchild recalls acting as a runner in the camp’s thriving trade, bringing in not only eggs, but also coveted cigarettes and liquor, neither of which was

¹³⁸ Scovel, *The Chinese Ginger Jars*, pg 118-119.

¹³⁹ John David Hayes, Untitled typescript document describing period of Weih sien internment.

¹⁴⁰ Mary Ball reports that Christmas Dinner at Weih sien in 1943 consisted of roast pork and fruit pudding, while a year later the internees were reduced to watery soup and sour bread. See Lawrence Earl, *She Loved a Wicked City: The Story of Mary Ball, Missionary* (New York: Dutton, 1962), pg 172.

supplied by the Japanese, with the exception of rare cigarettes from the occasional Red Cross parcel.¹⁴¹

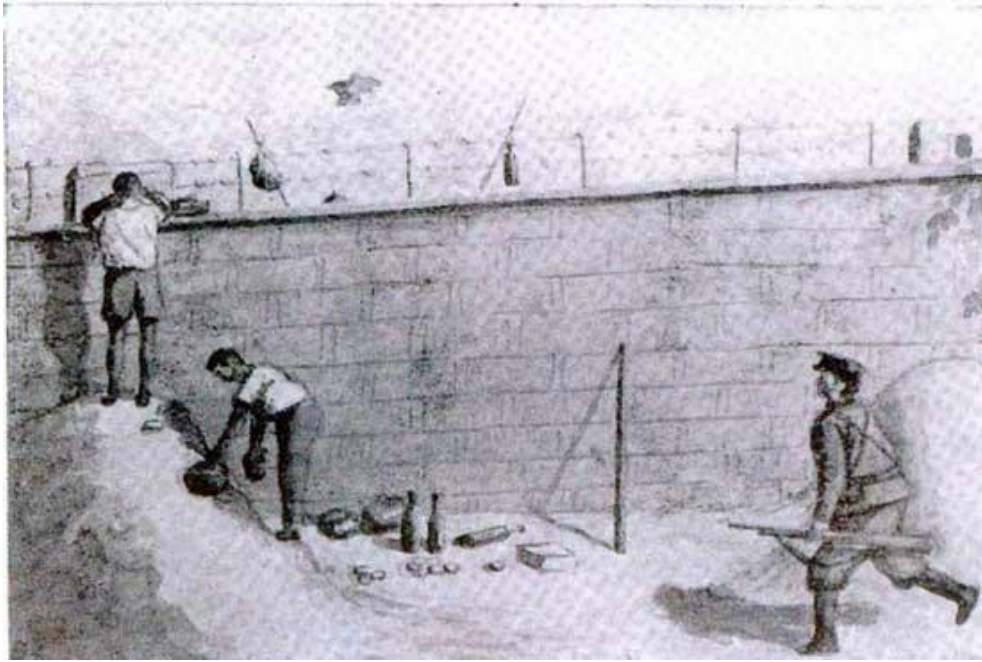


Figure 9: "Black Market" by Father Louis Schmid

Norman Cliff recalls coming across some businessmen from Tianjin busily engaged in bringing supplies into the camp from over the wall. Cliff notes that he came upon the men quite unexpectedly one day while going to chop wood. “In between electrified wires were three Chinese, busy passing over the wall below the wires boxes of eggs and some crates of bigar (wine),” he writes, “On this side of the wires were some Tientsin business men receiving the provisions and piling them behind some loose bricks.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Hamish McDonald, “A forgiving man in an unforgiving war camp,” www.theage.com.au, 18th August 2005, accessed on 16 May 2009. Hilda Hale recalls that the cigarettes internees received in Red Cross parcels that internees received were Camels and “so strong after the pitiful Chinese things we had been smoking that the first puff nearly knocked us senseless.” See Hale, *Indomitably Yours*, pg 218.

¹⁴² Norman Cliff, *Courtyard of the Happy Way* (Evesham: James, 1977), pg 73.

Another black marketeer, Jacob Goyas, became notorious, not only for his wheeling and dealing, but also for his stubborn refusal to perform all but the lightest of duties assigned by the camp labour committee. One internee recalls Goyas demanding some long-cherished jewellery in exchange for half a dozen eggs, three of which turned out to be rotten, while another incident involved Goyas claiming an heirloom gold watch in return for less than a pound of sugar.¹⁴³

Roberts H. Jernigan, an American businessman who worked as an administrator at the camp hospital from March to September, quickly became directly involved in the smuggling of food during the six months in 1943 in which he was at Weihsien. “We entered the camp with a little money and the coolies would bring us eggs and other food and slip it to us for a good price,” he recalled after being repatriated on the *Gripsholm*. “I have purchased as many as 2,000 eggs in one night in this way.” According to Jernigan, the Japanese guards attempted to crack down on the trade in food by erecting a charged barbed wire fencing around the camp, but this did little to deter either the Chinese from approaching the wall or the internees from buying.¹⁴⁴

Trade between the internees and nearby Chinese was indeed a vital part of camp life. Han Xiang, a young Chinese caught smuggling whose electrocuted corpse was left dangling from the wires around the camp in warning, as well as Xie Guangxian, Huang

¹⁴³ See Fred and Coral Dreggs, “Goyas (I refuse to dignify him with the word ‘Uncle’),” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jan 18, 2007 18:45 PST, and David Birch, “Re: Portraits, and “Uncle Jacob” Goyas,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jan 17, 2007 19:04 PST.

¹⁴⁴ Hollingsworth, “Roberts H. Jernigan Talks,” pg 12.

Lede, Huang Anwei, Zhang Xingtai and many others provided food, money or other assistance at various times to the internees.¹⁴⁵ But it must also be acknowledged that trade with the Japanese guards was not unknown.

Although internee sources are typically reticent on this, Han Tongwen records internees paying the guards to obtain specific food available only from outside the camp at a high price.¹⁴⁶ Internee John David Hayes refers to those in the camp who “were on good terms with the guards—too good later for their own health” in the context of food supplied by the Japanese.¹⁴⁷ The arrival of a new commandant in May of 1944 stood out in Hilda Hale’s mind as the point at which the trade between internee and guard intensified, with the commandant encouraging the guards to act as middlemen. Hale’s nameless description conjures up the perfect stereotype of a profiteer like Goyas, identifiably slimy on sight—“a fat, sleazy buy-sell man who, by claiming a weak heart, never did a stroke of work in the camp. Instead, this quisling type shuffled his revoltingly fat body around, collecting and distributing for those corrupt guards.”¹⁴⁸ This only got worse as the end of the conflict neared—Norman Cliff recalls a sort of “black market in reverse,” with Japanese guards snapping up valuables for resale outside the camp at a massive mark-up.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ 韓祥, 謝光先, 黃樂德, 黃安慰 and 張興泰.

¹⁴⁶ Han, *Guangwen xiaopu*, pg 103.

¹⁴⁷ Hayes, Untitled, unpaginated typescript document describing period of Weih sien internment.

¹⁴⁸ Hale, *Indomitably Yours*, pg 213.

¹⁴⁹ Cliff, *Courtyard of the Happy Way*, pg 114.

Yet few deals involved as much direct interaction (or innocence) as that struck by John Harrison, a boy in the camp, who later recalled one of the guards in a newspaper interview years after the war. “I’d sit down and give an hour of English and when I was all done I’d go and climb a tree and hunt birds,” he recalled, “It was a great adventure for me.”¹⁵⁰ The exchange is so shocking in its simplicity that it is worth further reflection—a young internee boy, quite likely barefoot and bedraggled, opposite a uniformed Japanese guard in the Shandong summer heat, patiently repeating phrases back and forth with the guard struggling to improve his pronunciation and the boy glancing eagerly at the trees stretching up into the sky with their promise of a closer look at the passing birds. Some forty years later, Harrison is bearded and grizzled, sitting for an interview with a journalist to reflect on his experiences, smiling for the camera as he holds aloft a tiny, stuffed bird. The image is emblematic of both the sharply narrowed range of choices available to the internees and the creativity with which they faced their internment.

Amongst such myriad wheeling and dealing of these and many others in the camp, by far the most well known figure in Weih sien’s trading circles was Father Patrick Scanlan, a Trappist monk brought to the camp from Mongolia. Lionised in countless internee memoirs, Scanlan became a legendary figure in the camp not only for his black market activities on behalf of the many interned families in Weih sien, but also for his cheeky defiance of the Japanese after being caught smuggling by the guards. His exploits thus became a focal point for memories of resistance in later writing by his fellow internees.

¹⁵⁰ Paul Watson, “Stuffed Bird a Memento of Boyhood in War Camp,” *Toronto Star*, 30th October 1988.

In his memoirs, Father Scanlan is matter-of-fact in describing the diet at Weih sien and his experiences with Weih sien's black market. Seemingly rueful of the friction that developed between internees and the Japanese over the poor meals and the prohibition on buying from the Chinese, Scanlan recalls the beginning of the trade: "People were hungry, the Japanese prohibition did not oblige in conscience, and it had become difficult to buy elsewhere—so I began buying from the family opposite our hut."¹⁵¹

Scanlan initially restricted his customers to only the sick and the very young, but after about a month he became known as a ready supplier throughout the camp, with internees of all kinds eager to do business with him. He writes:

The great majority of the internees, consisting of Americans, British, and in many cases their Russian wives, were accustomed to a good table...for these people, the few thin slices of bread, with a speck of butter, was a starvation ration with which to begin the day...When, therefore, Chinese appeared outside the wall with eggs, peanut oil to fry them in, sugar, jam, honey, fruit and poultry, you can guess what happened. Soon a brisk trade was going on over the wall.¹⁵²

This brisk trade, Scanlan modestly neglects to mention, became a vital lifeline for many and earned him the respect and gratitude of the camp.

Joyce Bradbury, in her memoir *Forgiven but Not Forgotten: Memoirs of a Teenage Girl Prisoner of the Japanese in China*, devotes an entire chapter to eulogizing Scanlan

¹⁵¹ Scanlan, *Stars in the Sky*, pg 153.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, pg 152-153.

and his work in the camp. “He was a good, gentle and brave man who, when a prisoner of the Japanese, fed the hungry, gave them hope and always brought good cheer,” Bradbury writes, while also calling for some form of official commemoration of the man to whom she believes the Weihsien internees owe “a great debt of honour.”¹⁵³

But Bradbury is hardly the first to make such a call for commemoration. Many internees in Weihsien took evident delight in Scanlan and it was not long before his escapades were set to lyrics for performance at one of the camp’s 4th of July celebrations, possibly as early as 1943:

*Oh, they trapped me a Trappist, on Wednesday,
Now few are the eggs to be fried,
Alone in a dark cell I ponder,
If my clients are hollow inside.
For here there is no one to buy from,
No one to help me along.
I’m missing the bustle of the business
Away from the hungering throng.
For, there’s a big bag on the outside
Overflowing with honey and jam
But how can it come onto our side
Till the bootleggers know where I am.
Oh, I hope that the time passes swiftly,
And I will be seeing you soon.
Then you’ll know where to find me right back in the harness
By the light of the silvery moon.
Many thanks to my friends, your good wishes
Flooded my lonely cell yesterday
Oh why can’t I swim like the fishes,
So the rain could have washed me away.
But confinement has some compensation
I’m not in a rush to be free,
Before it was Tsingtao that fed me
Now my food comes from dining room three.
The scene that I have from my window*

¹⁵³ Bradbury, *Forgiven but Not Forgotten*, Chapter 12, passim.

*A pasture where cattle do browse,
So how can a fellow be lonely
When the girls come to visit the cows.
The Fourth was in honour of freedom
Which is what I have anything but.
Oh, give me eggs when I need them
And I'll gladly sit tight in my hut.
OH, I hope that the time passes swiftly,
And I will be seeing you soon
Then you'll find me right back in the harness
By the light of the silvery moon.¹⁵⁴*

Although at first glance the above suggests a theme of cheeky resistance, with references to the “bustle of business” and a desire to get “back in the harness,” Father Scanlan and his black market activities come across slightly differently under close reading. Having been caught by the Japanese guards, Scanlan was placed in the Weihsien equivalent of solitary confinement, where he is “not in a rush to be free,” thanks to improved rations from dining room three, visits from “the girls,” and a view of some nearby cattle grazing.

But despite the plaudits, some internees felt a greater sense of unease about the black market. Myra Scovel, who entered the camp pregnant and with five young children, writes of the breakfast treat her family occasionally enjoyed courtesy of the black market: “The eggs were purchased from the black market and it went against my conscience to use them...I know we don't actually buy the eggs ourselves, but I don't like the idea of asking anyone else to sin for us.”¹⁵⁵ Father Scanlan, in her view, was a “mild-mannered,

¹⁵⁴ See “Prisoner's Song (Parody)” in *July 4th PROGRAMME*, pg 6, Series #MLA.MS.54, Marie J. Regier Frantz Janzen Papers, Box 3 Folder 33, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College.

¹⁵⁵ Scovel, *The Chinese Ginger Jars*, pg 113.

saintly gentleman,” but she nonetheless viewed his “benevolent, nefarious activities” with evident unease.¹⁵⁶

Scanlan himself, however, seemed to have viewed his own activities as neither particularly sinful nor heroic, noting that “there was no place better” for buying over the wall than his own hut, positioned as it was against the wall, with a friendly family of Chinese Christians on the other side who were happy to sell. Instead, Scanlan claimed the black market activity was viewed by the Japanese as internees “plotting against our captors” and engaging in “an unfriendly act.” Indeed, for Scanlan it became “a contest between them and us, both sides organized.” In his memoirs, Scanlan alternates between a regret at the rift between internees and the guards the black market caused and nonchalance, even ruefulness, at his participation in the smuggling.¹⁵⁷

This ruefulness might stem from Scanlan’s awareness that his activities would inevitably become ensnared in the legend and rumour that played such a prominent role in camp life. Recalling the story of his eventual arrest by the guards, Scanlan writes that he “heard it back so many times, but so exaggerated and in so many different versions that I hardly recognised it as an account of what had happened.”¹⁵⁸

Even on the level of basic detail, Scanlan’s account of the market is overshadowed by the drama with which other internees infused their accounts. In Cliff’s account, the priest

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, pg 114.

¹⁵⁷ Scanlan, *Stars in the Sky*, pg 153.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pg 157.

is arrested after being caught in the middle of a sale and sentenced to six months' solitary confinement, only to be released a day later by Japanese guards exhausted by his loud, early morning recitation of his office. Scanlan himself records a more modest two weeks of solitary confinement, soon reduced to ten days after a promise to stop singing the American pop songs he had developed a taste for.¹⁵⁹

Somewhat humorously, the mild-mannered priest describes one of his Chinese partners as clad only in a swimming suit in order to "save his clothes from being caught on the wire,"¹⁶⁰ while British American Tobacco manager Laurance Tipton opts for a racier description: "Greased and clad only in a g-string, he would slip in, take the orders, "shroff" over the accounts, receive payment and quietly disappear."¹⁶¹

Scanlan's efforts, despite their obvious benefit to the internees, also coincided with Japanese interests in projecting a positive image of internment life, thus casting some ambiguity on the notion of "them and us, both sides organised." A November 1943 report from the International Committee of the Red Cross archives reveals the extent to which Japanese efforts at keeping up appearances were a success: "Three meals are being prepared daily," Assistant Delegate A. Jost observed, before going on to comment that "Internees are cooking their own food...they are turning out well prepared and tasty, wholesome meals." Jost who was never able to meet with internees without the presence of Japanese minders, also discusses the availability of food supplies in the camp,

¹⁵⁹ See Scanlan, pg 158 and 160, and Cliff, *Courtyard of the Happy Way*, pg 80 and 81.

¹⁶⁰ Scanlan, *Stars in the Sky*, pg 155.

¹⁶¹ Laurance Tipton, *Chinese Escapade* (London: Macmillan, 1949), pg 80.

claiming that “Special orders for almost anything within reason are accepted and filled whenever possible,” before concluding that “The camp is well arranged and organized and relations between Inmates and Officers of the Detaining Power are good.”¹⁶²

Ambiguities aside, Scanlan’s “contest” with the Japanese played a central role in the construction of Weihsien internees’ narratives of survival and resistance. Springing from the basic need for sustenance, the black market now stands in memoir literature as a symbol of the internees’ ability to outwit their captors and to make use of pre-internment social contacts to independently provide for the basic needs of the camp community.

Scanlan himself serves as an excellent symbol of the ambivalence that characterised Weihsien internment. Sworn to silence and monastic life as part of his vows as a Trappist, the irrepressible cleric writes with evident relish of his time at Weihsien as part of a wider community, even recalling his enjoyment of reading aloud with flourish a list of camp regulations at the request of the Japanese commandant in the early days of the camp. Springing aboard a makeshift platform and reading with gusto, Scanlan performed a complicated balancing act that came to be emblematic of life at Weihsien, bringing wry smiles to the faces of his fellow internees at his animated demeanour while at the same time rendering more palatable what was otherwise a firm pronouncement of Japanese authority over the camp.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Jost, “CIVIL ASSEMBLY CENTRE,” pg 2 and 6.

¹⁶³ Scanlan, *Stars in the Sky*, pg 146.

The Bamboo Wireless

In addition to the eggs, fruit, and alcohol that came from over the wall, the Weihsien internees also hungered desperately for news from the wider world.¹⁶⁴ Anxious about both the lives from which they had been wrenched as well as the progress of the Allied war effort, internees were supplied with a limited allotment of Red Cross letters and subscriptions to Japanese-controlled newspapers, both of which were found to be generally unsatisfactory. Letters were frequently intercepted or obstructed,¹⁶⁵ with internees given instructions on various topics to avoid and so on, while the newspapers were regarded as pure propaganda.

For the younger internees, the restrictions on communication with the outside world produced more than a simple sense of frustration. “I had 3 postcards from my mother,” writes Kathleen Foster, recalling the separation she endured as a young child. “I wrote to her about food, my friends and Guiding, sometimes I signed them ‘Kathleen Strange’ in case she got muddled with the other Kathleen. Memories were getting dim.”¹⁶⁶

In contrast older internees battled a sense of isolation. In “Checking Up on the War News,” Marie Regier portrays a female internee, hair neatly curled and mouth dabbed

¹⁶⁴ One of the more unusual objects that came over the wall was a draft copy of a graduate thesis, written by future Yale professor Arthur Wright, who was apparently determined not to let the internment years go to waste. See Jonathan D. Spence, *Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), pg 324.

¹⁶⁵ S. Mary Kathryn Kappes, “Experience in a Concentration Camp (1941-1945), typewritten manuscript, School Sisters of St. Francis Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, pg 3.

¹⁶⁶ Kathleen Strange Foster, “The Past in a Foreign Country; They Do Things Differently There,” *Chefoo Magazine* (Summer, 1993), pg 11.

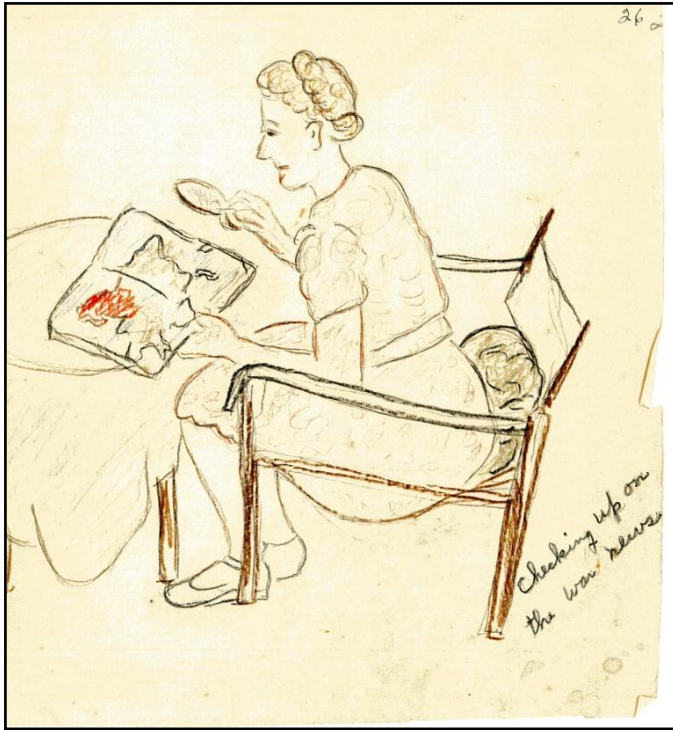


Figure 10: "Checking up on the news," by Marie Regier

with lipstick, as she pores over a map. Tellingly, Europe is engulfed in red on the map while Asia appears undisturbed, perhaps a reflection of the preoccupation with Europe that the largely British camp community maintained, even while held behind barbed wire in rural China.

Internees came to rely on their own efforts to bypass Japanese restrictions and developed a variety of means to gain news of the outside world and communicate with friends and relatives, referring to their efforts as the Bamboo Wireless. Some internees who worked in the camp as electricians agreed to repair broken radios brought to them by the Japanese guards, surreptitiously making use of the opportunity to update themselves on the latest news.¹⁶⁷ By and large, though, these methods made use of pre-war social relationships that were based on church or mission affiliation, employment, geography, and other ties, often highlighting the dependant nature of the relationship internees had with their not-so-distant Chinese neighbours.

For the Catholic orders in Weih sien, links with the outside world came in the form of their Chinese co-religionists and non-Allied Catholics who largely retained their freedom

¹⁶⁷ Kappes, "Experience in a Concentration Camp (1941-1945), pg 4.

of movement in China. Sister Mary Servatia recalls the regular visits of a Father Ladislav or a Father Flesch, ostensibly to deliver communion wafers to the interned Catholics. During these visits, there would be an opportunity for brief conversation, sharing news of both the world outside the camp and the conditions faced by the internees. More importantly, nestled in the bottom of the box used for carrying the wafers was a small package of letters addressed to various internees, thus enabling them to maintain communication with their missions throughout China.¹⁶⁸

The Escape

For some, the monotony of camp life proved to be too much, with letters and news over the Bamboo Wireless proving to be insufficient. Laurance Tipton, whose career in Beijing as an administrator in a foreign-owned tobacco firm had brought him numerous run-ins with the Japanese prior to internment, yearned to escape over the wall almost from the moment he entered the camp. Tipton made every effort to prepare for an escape, gathering clothes and supplies, as well as information on the political situation in the surrounding countryside.

Having linked up with other like-minded individuals in the camp, Tipton and his co-conspirators began using their network of connections in northern China, writing to a French Catholic priest a few miles from the camp and another contact as far away as Beijing, all without result. In a chapter in his memoirs headed, "This Futile Existence,"

¹⁶⁸ Servatia, *A Cross in China*, pg 272-274.

Tipton writes of his frustration at being unable to proceed immediately with his plans for escape. The reply from the nearby priest, he writes, was “most discouraging, emphasising the folly of attempting to escape into a district thick with traitor troops, Communists and independent guerrillas, where the allegiance and disposition of the forces changed from day to day.”¹⁶⁹



Figure 11: "Over the Wall," by Katharine Jowett

After many false starts, plans finally began to coalesce late in the spring of 1944. “By late spring,” Tipton wrote, “conditions had deteriorated to a marked degree. Supplies were repeatedly cut, comfort money most irregular and eventually ceased altogether, owing to some dispute between the Japanese and the Swiss over the rate of exchange...People were selling jewelry, gold watches, wedding rings, precious stones, furs and false teeth, anything on which they could raise a little extra money.”¹⁷⁰ With conditions in the camp worsening, the group of would-be escapees which had formed around Tipton and a fiercely anti-Communist Catholic priest, Raymond De Jaegher, found an opportunity to gain support from the camp committee for an escape—contact with nearby Chinese guerrillas.

¹⁶⁹ Tipton, *Chinese Escapade*, pg 91.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pg 93.

Developments outside the camp were beginning to work in favour of an escape. Wang Yumin, a nearby Nationalist guerrilla, was faced with the trouble of maintaining ammunition supplies for his group when an aide suggested that a rescue mission to the camp might open the door to co-operation and support from the British and American embassies in Chongqing.¹⁷¹ In a May 4th 1944 letter to the internees, Wang Shangzhi, a leading figure in the group, made a dramatic offer. On the condition of assistance from the British and American embassies in Chongqing in evacuating the internees, Wang's forces would launch a daring raid on the camp, storming the gates in an operation that would see the Japanese guards eliminated and the internees flown in relay from a makeshift airfield to the relative safety of Free China.¹⁷²

Far from being overjoyed at the news, the proposed raid caused some degree of trepidation among those who learned of it. In a report penned shortly after their escape on 9th June 1944, Tipton and Hummel would blandly describe the notion of evacuation as “impracticable,”¹⁷³ while in a subsequent interview Hummel more bluntly called it “a harebrained idea.”¹⁷⁴ Writing in 1975, former Nationalist guerrilla Wang Yumin

¹⁷¹ Wang Yumin, *Kangzhan banian*, pg 195.

¹⁷² Wang Shangzhi, Shandong-Jiangsu War Area, to “the Beleaguered British and Americans,” Weih sien Internment Camp, 4th May 1944, taken from the collection of Dr. Norman Cliff, <http://www.weih sien-paintings.org/NormanCliff/indexFrame.htm> accessed on 30th July 2009. See Image Appendix B: Documents, Figure 17.

¹⁷³ Arthur W. Hummel and Laurance Tipton, “Report of Mission from Weih sien Civilian Assembly Center to Commander Wang Yu Min,” in *Personal Papers of Sir Lindsay Tasman Ride* [microform] (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial, 2001), reel 24.

¹⁷⁴ Arthur W. Hummel, interview with Charles Stuart Kennedy, 13th April 1994, “Ambassador Arthur W. Hummel, Jr.,” The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, pg 5.

conceded the scheme would have been “difficult to implement.”¹⁷⁵ Fully mindful of the logistics involved in evacuating a community of over 1500 men, women and children, with many sick and elderly among them, members of the camp committee seemed more inclined to work towards improving conditions within the camp itself, rather than an outright evacuation. Mindful of the need not to offend their would-be liberators, the camp committee opted to rebuff the proposal diplomatically and, in a politely-worded missive, simply stated that the circumstances within the camp made “the successful operation of this plan doubtful.”

But despite the cool reception the plan engendered, Tipton nonetheless was able to use the proposed raid to further his arguments for a two-man team to ascend the wall and act as liaisons with the guerrillas. “If the matter was judiciously handled,” Tipton would write in his memoirs, “we could obtain our objective, [escape] and at the same time be of some service to the camp...for the benefit of the camp this connection should not be ignored...we should work towards turning this wild scheme to some more practical form of assistance of real benefit.”¹⁷⁶ The smooth-talking tobacco dealer was soon to have his way, with an escape planned late on the night of 9th June, 1994, although the last minute intervention of one of the interned Franciscans, Father Rutherford, altered his plans in one respect.

¹⁷⁵ Wang Yumin, *Kangzhan banian*, pg 196.

¹⁷⁶ Tipton, *Chinese Escapade*, pg 97.

Fearful of the political fallout that an escaped priest might cause, Father Rutherford lobbied hard against De Jaegher's participation, with the result that Arthur Hummel,¹⁷⁷ formerly an English instructor at Fu Jen University in Beijing, fell in with the would-be escapees at the eleventh hour. For Tipton, it may have simply been a matter of replacing one Chinese-speaking foreigner for another, but the differences between Hummel and De Jaegher were noteworthy.

A cosmopolitan Catholic priest, at 39 De Jaegher had spent many years of service in China, held a powerful disdain for the Chinese communists, and would have been more than an equal partner to the 35-year old Tipton. Arthur Hummel would later describe De Jaegher as "very talented," while acknowledging that his own grasp of Mandarin was outclassed by the Belgian priest's. In contrast, Hummel himself was a somewhat counter-intuitive choice for the escape. He was no stranger to China, to be sure, having been born to missionary parents in China's Shanxi province and having spent the early years of his life in the country. But at 24 years of age and having lived a somewhat 'roving life,' as he would later describe it, doing various low-paying jobs in the United States, it is likely that Hummel would have struggled to make himself heard once he and Tipton were on

¹⁷⁷ Arthur W. Hummel, Jr. would later serve as the second United States Ambassador to the People's Republic of China from 1981-1985, in which time he served as the American chief negotiator for the landmark US-China Joint Communiqué on US Arms Sales to Taiwan in 1982. In the communiqué the United States signalled its willingness to reduce arms sales to Taiwan and reaffirmed that "there is but one China." See Paul Lewis, "Arthur Hummel Jr. Dies at 80; Negotiated Taiwan Arms Pact," *The New York Times*, 11th February 2001, accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/11/world/arthur-hummel-jr-dies-at-80-negotiated-taiwan-arms-pact.html> on 28th August 2010. Hummel's father, Arthur Hummel Sr., was an American missionary to China and later served as the first chief of the Orientalia Division at the Library of Congress, and is well-known in the world of China studies for his editorship of *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)*, published in 1943-1944.

their own with the guerrillas. “If there had been ‘hippies,’” Hummel would later recall in an interview, “I’d have been one.”¹⁷⁸



Figure 12: Hummel (2nd from left), Tipton (4th from left) and De Jaegher (6th from left)

De Jaegher, frustrated in his desire to escape the camp, describes the escape in minute detail, claiming that preparations involved co-ordinating the phases of the moon and the rotation of the guards with the availability of a small commando squad who would rendezvous with the escapees a short distance from the camp.¹⁷⁹ Guided only by moonlight as they made their way through the Shandong countryside, both Tipton and De Jaegher present the actual escape in terms of high drama;¹⁸⁰ Hummel, in contrast, recalls the escape over the fence in more prosaic terms: “we had a small ladder which we used to

¹⁷⁸ Hummel interview transcript, pg 2.

¹⁷⁹ De Jaegher and Kuhn, *The Enemy Within*, pg 241.

¹⁸⁰ Tipton, despite evident relish in recounting the details of getting over the wall, does acknowledge some chagrin at being conveyed in a wheelbarrow for part of the trip to the guerrilla base. See Tipton, *China Escapade*, pg 136.

get over a brick wall. We put a stepping stool outside, stood on that, jumped over the barbed wire, and we were out.”¹⁸¹

According to plan, the escape was reported to the Japanese the following day during roll call by the internees themselves, leading to Japanese fury and the strict questioning of those who had roomed with the two men. Suspicion also fell on the Chinese residents in the immediate vicinity of the camp, especially those with any past association with the old Presbyterian mission. Han Tongwen records that Huang Anwei, son of the former headmaster of the Guangwen Middle School, was hauled in for extensive questioning by the guards, but without result.¹⁸²

When word of the escape spread to the internees, the effect on the camp was electrifying, both literally, as the Japanese strengthened the camp walls, and figuratively, as the internees revelled in some of their own having put one over on the guards. But despite the sense of triumph, the actual result of the escape was decidedly mixed.

After arriving at the guerrilla base, the two men were able to establish contact with the British and American embassies in Chongqing, thereby opening a lifeline that saw important drugs and other supplies airlifted to Shandong and then smuggled into the camp, an action which likely saved lives. Their stated objectives, according to their first report after escaping, included persuading the guerrillas that evacuation was impractical, setting up reliable communications between the camp and the outside world, and

¹⁸¹ Hummel interview transcript, pg 5.

¹⁸² Han, *Guangwen xiaopu*, pg 106.

arranging for the delivery of supplies, all of which they can be judged to have succeeded in.¹⁸³

But ultimately, Tipton and Hummel's escape to the nearby guerrilla group was essentially a strike for the status quo within the camp. Alarmed at the prospect of a raid by Chinese forces of any stripe, the Weih sien internees opted for maintaining the relative safety of camp life as opposed to the serious gamble that a mass escape would entail.

This commitment to the status quo was compounded not long after the escape when word of a possible relocation to China's northeast reached the internees; this time the camp committee contacted Tipton and Hummel and the guerrillas to explore the possibility of bombing the local rail lines to prevent any movement out of Weih sien. Much to their relief, the answer came back—the rail line could be knocked out with a mere 24 hours notice,¹⁸⁴ thus ensuring there would be no change to the internees' current circumstances.

Weih sien Re-imagined

While the dangers of wartime internment were a constant, life at Weih sien was by no means restricted to an endless pattern of school or work. Internees also organised numerous classes on a variety of topics, one of which was art. Jane Dusselier, writing of

¹⁸³ Laurance Tipton, Letter to W.B. Christian, R.R. Smith, or R. Price, Yee Tsoong Tobacco Dis. Ltd, 27th January, 1944 [in *Personal Papers of Sir Lindsay Tasman Ride* [microform] (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial, 2001), reel 24], pg 1 and 2. Tipton also used the occasion to put in an order for the purchase of shares in British American Tobacco with any outstanding salary he might have accrued.

¹⁸⁴ De Jaegher and Kuhn, *The Enemy Within*, pg 262.

art produced in the internment camps for Japanese Americans, has described the implications of dislocation, both in terms of place and in terms of certain aspects of individual and collective identity.¹⁸⁵ Art, Dusselier argues, “served as a much needed space for identity formation” and provided “a space where personal and collective identities were remade.”¹⁸⁶

Through this act of re-making, Weihsien art, with its stubborn avoidance of the grimy reality of life behind barbed wire, can be seen as filled with nostalgic longing for life before the war or with optimism for an imagined, post-war future. Delphine Hirasuna might well have been writing of the Weihsien internees in her work on art produced in internment camps in America when she deployed the two concepts of *shikataganai*—“it can’t be helped”—and more importantly, *gaman*—“to endure the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity” to describe the outlook that characterised the outlook of her community during internment.¹⁸⁷ Rather than being exclusive traits of interned Japanese Americans, *shikataganai* and *gaman* symbolise well the attitudes of Weihsien artists, whose artistic works reflect a beauty not readily apparent in their surroundings.

¹⁸⁵ Jane Dusselier, “Gendering Resistance and Remaking Place: Art in Japanese American Concentration Camps,” *Peace & Change* 30, no. 2 (April 2005): pg 194.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pg 196.

¹⁸⁷ Delphine Hirasuna and Kit Hinrichs, *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942-1946* (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 2005), pg 7. Internee Langdon Gilkey pursues a similar line of thought in his memoirs by attributing to Reinhold Niebuhr the well-known prayer: “Oh, Lord, help us to accept those things we cannot change, to be dissatisfied with what we can change, and to be able to discern the difference.” See Gilkey, *Shantung Compound*, pg 49.

Artists at Weihsien turned to the camp for inspiration, more often than not creating works that re-cast spaces within the camp as idyllic oases.¹⁸⁸ Artists like Eileen Bazire, Father Frans Verhoeven, and Father Schmid, among many others, drew inspiration from their surroundings and provided a visual record of an idealised, imagined Weihsien. Eileen Bazire, an internee who cast Weihsien in watercolour, created vivid images of internment life that are remarkable scenes for their tranquillity in what was, after all, a wartime internment camp. In addition to painting, Bazire designed posters for camp concerts and lecture series on Dutch painters, and played in many of the camp performances.

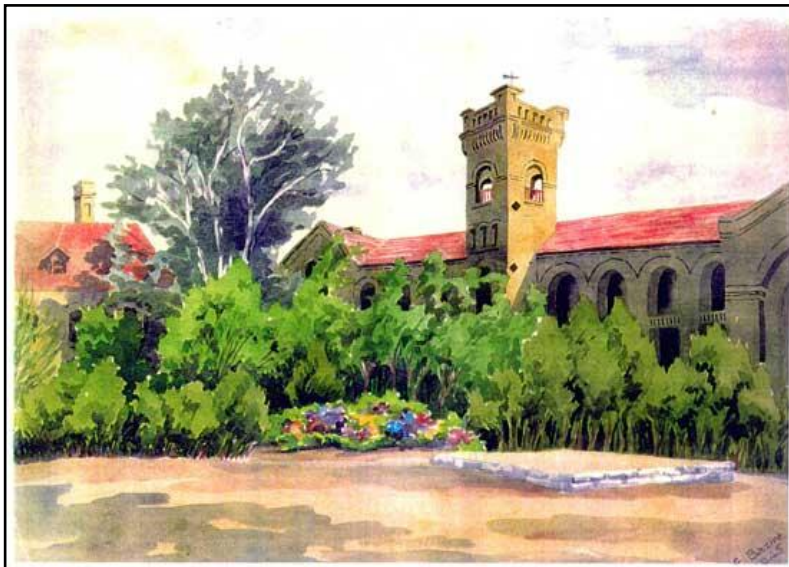


Figure 13: Block 23, by Eileen Bazire

As one of a series of works by Bazire, *Block 23* is representative of the many landscapes painted by Weihsien's artists, with a near-total absence of human figures.

In *Block 23*, painted during her time at Weisien, Bazire re-creates the Ladies' Dormitory, used by the internees to house many of the Catholic sisters, with one of the camp playgrounds and

lush greenery shown in the

¹⁸⁸Hirasuna has likewise commented on the seeming fascination interned Japanese Americans had with recreating their physical surroundings through landscape painting. See Hirasuna and Hinrichs, *The Art of Gaman*, pg 67.

Painted with an idealised style that transforms what was a dusty sweltering compound into an oasis-like place of beauty, the Weihsien artists have a tendency to omit the Japanese, with their guard towers, barbed wire and guns, almost entirely.

Indeed, it is the rare painting of Weihsien that includes human figures at all.¹⁸⁹ Images of the guards are especially rare, appearing more often as less elaborate sketches in contrast to the elaborate watercolours favoured for landscapes. Father Louis Schmid, a Dutch Catholic priest who stayed in Weihsien only a short time, produced only one image that included the Japanese, an Indian ink wash drawing that depicts black marketeers in action, complete with lone Japanese guard rushing to the scene.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, an image by Ida Talbot depicts a more typically idyllic scene of play, with children on swings and playing in a small group at a playground within the camp.¹⁹¹ Not only is there a complete absence of any sign of the Japanese in Talbot's work, but even the dust and crowdedness of internment camp life is far from apparent.

Interpreting the exact meaning behind such images of internment is far from being clear cut. Indeed, some internees have expressed wonder at these artists who found so much beauty in a camp that was “cramped, crowded, dusty and dirty.”¹⁹² What is clear,

¹⁸⁹ Marie Regier stands apart as the most obvious counterexample when it comes to scenes of people and Weihsien art. Regier worked primarily with coloured pencil and devoted her numerous sketches almost exclusively to human activity in the camp.

¹⁹⁰ See Figure 5, pg 56.

¹⁹¹ See Appendix A: Images, Figure 2.

¹⁹² Donald Menzi, quoting Langdon Gilkey in reference to paintings of the camp by Gertrude Wilder, “Some descriptive words, please,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jun 25, 2005 23:09 PDT.

though, is that these internees actively sought to engage the camp environment through art, re-working the landscape in which they found themselves with watercolour, oil, and ink¹⁹³ just as surely as they did when transforming derelict classrooms into dormitories and a barbed wire enclosure into “A home that still holds many warm memories.”¹⁹⁴

This sense of internment camp as home can also be seen in the ways in which internees arranged their quarters. In a notice placed on the camp bulletin board, the “Women’s Auxiliary Ideal Homes Exhibition Committee” advertised an upbeat invitation to discuss what life in the camp had taught internees, and included a drawing, presumably of one such “ideal home” that presents an image of conviviality and creativity, with internees shown in a scene of hospitality. Complete with various pieces of furniture and a system of pulleys for added storage space, the image invokes a sense of home and domesticity that runs in stark contrast to any notion of a prison camp.¹⁹⁵ Margaret Prentice and her five roommates dubbed their quarters “Ye Corner Cupboard,” and made a poster to hang on the door, complete with a list of “contents” that included all of the roommates’ names.¹⁹⁶

As evident from the visual record of Weihsien life, internees invested great time and effort in creating a sense of home within the camp. Arriving in rooms stripped bare of

¹⁹³ See Appendix A: Images for a general sampling of Weihsien art.

¹⁹⁴ David Birch, “Re: it was different for the old people,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Jan 21, 2004 09:08 PST.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix B: Documents, Figure 7.

¹⁹⁶ Margaret May Prentice, *Unwelcome at the Northeast Gate* (Shawnee Mission, Kansas: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1966) pg 149.

any furniture, internees used art and material objects to soften the starkness of their new environment. “When a few jugs and basins and other pieces of enamel-ware had been unpacked,” writes George Scott of the internee quarters, “they began to look and feel more like home!”¹⁹⁷ Father Hanquet, in his memoir, presents a sketch of a room that looks as well-stocked as any missionary home from the era, complete with neatly arranged place settings, table cloth, curtains and other domestic touches not normally associated with internment camps.

In producing these images, the Weih sien internees both reasserted their own agency over camp life but also, inadvertently or not, played into Japanese hands, leaving a visual record of internment life almost akin to the Japanese blandishments of ‘all the comforts of Western civilization.’ Just as the Japanese rushed to photograph Weih sien children as they trooped about the camp in Scouts and Guides uniforms,¹⁹⁸ or bragged about the standards of medical care as internees toiled



Figure 14: Interior View of 4-person house, by Emmanuel Hanquet

¹⁹⁷ George A. Scott, *In Whose Hands?: a story of internment in China* (London: China Inland Mission, 1956), pg 50.

¹⁹⁸ Estelle Horne, nee Cliff, “Re: Weih sien,” comment on the “*Weih sien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Apr 23, 2009 9:59 am.

to run the Shadyside Hospital,¹⁹⁹ so they might well have nodded their approval over the shoulders of Weihsien's artists, fully appreciative of the lushly-treed oases they invariably cast across the page.

These oases were not only a diversion from the dreariness of camp life, but have also contributed to the historical record of the Weihsien camp, becoming a supplement to written sources in archives, and a family heirloom passed down from internees to their descendants. Internment "wasn't ideal at all," one internee acknowledges, but "Perhaps with the natural adaptability of childhood, we sort of naturally adjusted to the environment in which we found ourselves."²⁰⁰

The notion of a natural adjustment represents a "child's eye view" of the pragmatism and flexibility shown by the adult internees in reacting to the internment camp environment as well as another instance of shared interests between the internees and the Japanese. While no doubt representing an 'adjustment,' the accommodation reached by internees was not natural in the sense that it simply spontaneously developed; rather, members of the internee community took conscious actions to determine the course of life within the camp. Largely within the bounds laid down by the Japanese, the internees met with success in creating community life in several respects. In caring for the young, internees maintained functioning schools and activity programs for school-aged children

¹⁹⁹ Gwen Dew, "Gwen Dew Meets the Gripsholm: Death Eases Torments of an Aged Jap Prisoner," *The Detroit News*, April 7 1943.

²⁰⁰ David Birch, "Re: it was different for the old people," comment on the "*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*" Email Discussion List, Jan 21, 2004 09:08 PST.

and young adults, as can be seen most persuasively in the continued operations of the Chefoo School.

Finally, internees imposed a layer of tranquillity on the dreary conditions in which they found themselves by means of artistic expression. Dirt roads and dusty buildings were re-imagined surrounded by greenery and bathed in colour in numerous paintings by artists in the camp. Placed within an environment in which the power dynamic overwhelmingly favoured their Japanese captors, Weihsien artists responded simply by brushing them out of the picture.

Liberation and the Aftermath

By 1945, there were definite signs of frayed nerves within the camp. Internee Esther Hess, writing in the final months of the year, after liberation, recalled:

During June and July of 1945 persistent rumours of Allied successes came via Chinese scavengers who were allowed in the compound several times a week. Some predicted one month—others two years yet before the end. There was much discontent and discouragement in some circles and the thought of another winter of stoves and coal balls was more than some thought they could face. In fact, we had five mental cases to deal with and others with nervous breakdowns.²⁰¹

Two and a half years had indeed taken their toll. Largely isolated from the outside world, the Weihsien internees were filled with uncertainty over the rumours that were coming

²⁰¹ Hess, to “Praying Friends,” pg 1.

over the wall and news of Germany's defeat had sent tremors of anticipation and anxiety throughout the camp.

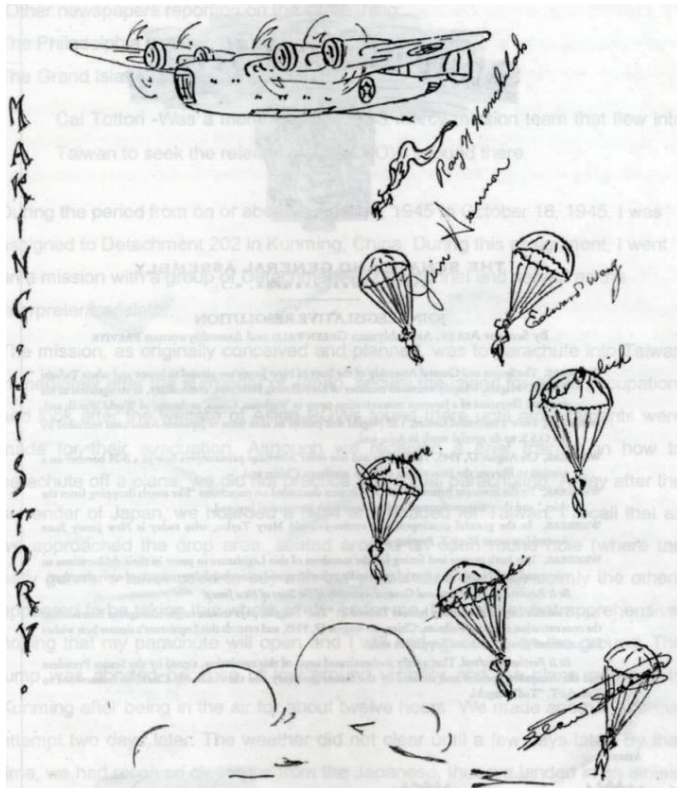


Figure 15: American paratroopers liberate Weihsien, 17th Aug 1945

This uncertainty came to a decisive end at around half past nine on 17th August, 1945. Setting out from an American airstrip in Kunming and flying via Xi'an on what was known as the Duck Mission, a team of paratroopers including James Moore, an alumnus of the Chefoo School, along with Ray Hanchkulak, James Hannon, Ted Nagaki, Peter Orlich and Stanley

Staiger, plus a Chinese interpreter named 'Eddie' Cheng-han Wang, swept over Weihsien, gradually reducing altitude in their search for the camp. As the B-24 dropped to 500 feet, the camp at last came into view, thronging with crowds waving up at the shining American bomber.²⁰²

No sooner had the roar of the engines washed over Weihsien than the internees were on their feet, rushing to catch a glimpse of this potent symbol of their impending freedom.

²⁰² Norwood, *Chronological Report on on Duck Mission* , pg 1.

Mary Previte, sick in bed, found herself magically restored by the mere sight of the aircraft sweeping through the sky. “Weihsien went mad,” she recalls simply.²⁰³ After making an initial pass, the B-24 doubled back, soaring a scant 450 feet over the camp before, to the delight of the internees, paratroopers began their descent from the plane into the fields outside Weihsien’s wall. “The parachutes came down so evenly spaced,” marvelled internee Ted Pearson. “They were like steps in a staircase.”²⁰⁴

Internees streamed through the gates of the camp and out into the surrounding countryside to welcome their liberators, paying scarce heed to the Japanese guards standing helplessly at the gates. Borne through the gates by a jubilant crowd, the paratroopers led by Major Staiger proceeded through the camp held aloft by the internees. Former British Consul at Fuzhou Edward Werner recalls the march from the gate into the camp as the paratroopers’ greatest challenge: “After parachuting from his aircraft, getting through three strands of barbed-wire defences, and brushing aside what remained of the Japanese guard, he literally had to “swim” through some 200 English and American girls who were expressing their joy and gratitude by trying to kiss him. From that point the Weihsien camp became emparadised [sic] through the kindness and generous help of the American officers.”²⁰⁵ But despite the sense of victory surrounding the team’s arrival, the situation in the camp was far from settled.

²⁰³ Mary T. Previte, *A Song of Salvation at Weihsien Prison Camp* (Soudersburg, PA: Moses and Ida Chu, 1985), pg 26.

²⁰⁴ Mary T. Previte, “A collection of memories of Liberation Day, August 17, 1945,” comment on the “*Weihsien Internees (w internees)*” Email Discussion List, Aug 17, 2007 1:54 PST.

²⁰⁵ Edward Chalmers Werner, “To the Editor of the Times,” *The Times*, 21st August 1947, pg 5.

Numbering only seven, the liberation team, after consultation with the internees' camp committee, proposed that the Japanese remain at their posts, maintaining security against *external* threats and retaining responsibility for supplying the camp. The initial meeting was a tense affair, with Staiger and the Americans arriving at Weihsien relatively unaware of the situation on the ground, and the vanquished Japanese faced with an American opponent who had arrived victorious, literally a bolt from the blue. Presented with the American proposals, the commandant equivocated, perhaps mindful of his force of some fifty armed guards to Staiger's six paratroopers, and declined to make a binding decision, instead accepting the situation, albeit "temporarily."²⁰⁶

Internee David Michell explained it as "a master stroke of saving face," noting that there was not much else that a mere seven G.I.s could do.²⁰⁷ Other internees also took note of the situation. Laurance Tipton returned to the camp some days after the American arrival, noting that, as a consequence of the decision to allow the guards to remain responsible for the camp's safety, "the Japanese continued to retain their arms, and, to some degree, their arrogance."²⁰⁸

This decision, made by the Americans in the immediate wake of Japan's surrender, was far from unique and not without controversy, representing as it did a final moment of co-operation between the Japanese and the internees. Over the coming weeks, as the increasingly violent rivalry between Communist and Nationalist forces spilled out into

²⁰⁶ Norwood, *Chronological Report on Duck Mission*, pg 4.

²⁰⁷ Michell, *A Boy's War*, pg 130.

²⁰⁸ Tipton, *Chinese Escapade*, pg 232.

the open all over China, the Japanese gradually withdrew, replaced by American troops tasked with overseeing the evacuation of the internees. But despite the swiftness with which the Americans seized Weih sien, the evacuation proved to be a long, drawn-out process. Rail lines out of Weih sien were continually sabotaged by Communist guerrillas, and it would be some two months after the American arrival at the camp before the last of the internees finally departed.²⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

After some two and a half years of uncertainty and hardship, the flash of a plane in the sky and the arrival of seven lightly-armed American paratroopers brought internment at Weih sien to an abrupt end. With the war ended and victory over the Japanese declared, many of the internees might have reasonably expected a return to life *ante bellum*, complete with all of the attendant comforts of treaty port society along the China coast. And yet for many of the internees, liberation brought with it news of homes looted, businesses destroyed and the reality of starting a new life in places far removed from China's borders.

For the younger internees, life at Weih sien was without doubt a formative experience. Mary T. Previte, interned at the age of nine, went on to pursue a career as the administrator of temporary holding centre for youths ages 14 through 17 in Camden, New Jersey. Previte's administration of the centre, with her heavy emphasis on "order, rules

²⁰⁹ See F. Tillman Durdin, "Japanese Seized in Tsingtao Arson," *The New York Times*, 14th October 1945, pg 10.

and predictability,” won plaudits from local organisations over the course of her career, with Previte openly pointing to the care provided by Chefoo staff at Weihsien as the inspiration for her philosophy.²¹⁰ Stephen Metcalf, who was interned at Weihsien as a teenager, spent the bulk of his career as a missionary in Japan, credited his relationship with fellow Weihsien internee Eric Liddell as the source of his inspiration for missionary work in the land of his former captors, recalling “he taught me to love my enemies, the Japanese, and to pray for them.”²¹¹

In contrast, older internees, naturally enough, faced the challenge of re-building their lives post-internment with fewer working years ahead of them and greater levels of responsibilities. Helen Burton, writing in 1948, describes her existence immediately after internment as filled with a craving to return to the life she once led, alternately booking, cancelling and re-booking tickets to Beijing as part of what she flamboyantly dubbed her own private “I shall return” campaign.²¹² While Burton did eventually return to China, her time there was short-lived. The treaty port communities that played such an important role in expatriate life prior to the war had been returned to full Chinese jurisdiction, while the growing conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists cast a growing shadow over the country. Writing of her return to Honolulu from China at the start of November 1948, when the evacuation of Western expatriates from northern China surged,

²¹⁰ Debra Nussbaum, “IN PERSON, She Teaches Survival, Learned the Hard Way,” *The New York Times*, 31st December 2000, accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/31/nyregion/in-person-she-teaches-survival-learned-the-hard-way.html?scp=1&sq=nussbaum+previte&st=cse&pagewanted=all> on July 17st 2010.

²¹¹ McDonald, “A forgiving man in an unforgiving war camp.”

²¹² Helen Burton, letter to “Hello, Everybody,” dated September 1948 with a December addendum, pg 1. Copy provided by Donald Menzi.

Burton wrote: “No sooner had I arrived than the Far Eastern situation took a turn for the worse and hell seemed literally a-poppin’.”²¹³ In Burton’s case, the end of internment meant not a return to pre-war life, running her shop in the *Grand Hotel du Pekin*, but instead simple retirement in Honolulu.

Such a transition proved difficult for more than a few of the internees. Leonard Stranks, a Salvation Army missionary to China, returned to his native Australia, near penniless and in ruined health. In a series of letters to the Civilian Internees Trust Fund,²¹⁴ Stranks outlined the impact internment had on his own life and that of his wife’s, as well as the difficulties they encountered following their return to Australia. Both required a long recovery upon arriving in Australia, with Mrs Stranks laid low by severely infected gums brought on after her dentures were repaired with violin string in the final year of internment, and Mr Stranks suffering much degraded eyesight and rheumatic pains.²¹⁵ But while Stranks acknowledged that their return to Australia also brought about an eventual return to good health, their experiences at Weih sien as internees deeply impacted their quality of life.

²¹³ Ibid, pg 8.

²¹⁴ Established by the Australian government in 1952 to help meet the needs of Australian nationals interned by the Japanese, the Trust was funded by the sale of Japanese assets that had been seized by the Australian government. Eligibility for a grant from the Trust was restricted to Australian citizens interned by the Japanese who could provide documentation of medical or mental disability stemming from their time in internment. For more information about the Trust, see Twomey’s *Australia’s Forgotten Prisoners*.

²¹⁵ Leonard Stranks, “The Civilian Internees’ Trust Fund: Application for a Grant,” pg 2, and Leonard Stranks, Letter to Senator Robertson, 8th January 1957, in *STRANKS, Leonard Hickson (52/11) Series B510*, Series Accession No. B510/0 Control Symbol 345, National Archives of Australia.

In his correspondence with the Internees Trust Fund, Stranks wrote of his difficulty in re-establishing himself in a new place late in life and the material losses his family suffered as a result of internment. “I have had something of a struggle,” he remarked in reference to his experiences in trying to build a home to retire in at the age of 66. “I am working on an overdraft through the bank and have done a great deal of the construction myself...the Japanese authorities took a quantity of our goods in Peking and sold at auction [sic], promising to pay us in Camp but nothing came of these promises.”²¹⁶ Over the course of his correspondence with the Trust, Stranks listed the various household goods seized by the Japanese and expressed his sense of anguish and frustration at the lack of support from the Australian government following his release. “Prisoners of War only suffered physically,” Stranks argued in one such letter, “and it should be remembered that Prisoners of War would receive Full Pay and perhaps more, and all Hospital and Doctor’s Treatment...the Civilian, on the other hand, usually lived in the foreign land...and in many cases received no Salary during the period of Internment and no rehabilitation.”²¹⁷ Stymied by his lack of documentation, it was only after some six years of lobbying and the intervention of an Australian senator and a member of the House of Representatives that Stranks and his wife were awarded grants of £86 each, which they accepted with evident satisfaction.²¹⁸

Internment was not only of great personal significance to those individuals who experienced life at Weihsien, but was also one of the closing chapters in the era of

²¹⁶ Stranks, “Application for a Grant,” pg 2.

²¹⁷ Leonard Stranks, Letter to A.J. Withers, 30th September 1957, in *STRANKS, Leonard Hickson*.

²¹⁸ Leonard Stranks, Letter to A.J. Withers, 26th May 1958, in *STRANKS, Leonard Hickson*.

foreign communities that had sprung up in China in the wake of the Opium Wars. It is no small irony that, despite eventual victory in the war against Japan, when the Weihsien internees emerged from camp China, and their place in it, had been irreversibly transformed by the events of the war.

Accommodation

Held by the Japanese as allied civilians, the internees at Weihsien had regained their freedom through victory in a long-fought war. But just as the fruits of victory were at odds with the expectations the internees had long harboured, so too is the reality of their internment at odds with the narratives of war that notions like ‘resistance’ or ‘collaboration’ might suggest.

Internee memoirs and other sources make clear that over the course of two and a half years of internment at Weihsien, the relations between guards and internees were usually tranquil, with incidents of violent outbursts or demonstrations from the internees unheard of. Camp regulations regarding the roll call were observed, a curfew was maintained (aided, no doubt, by the guards’ habit of shutting off power to the camp at ten o’clock each night), and a general sense of order prevailed. Despite the violence that naturally accompanies armed conflict and the brutality with which the Japanese behaved elsewhere in Asia, including in other camps, there is no indication that internees at Weihsien ever assaulted a guard, ever organised a riot, strike or protest, or ever seriously contemplated a mass escape. Geographically separated from the frontlines of the war and temporally at a remove from the initial violence of Japan’s invasion, the Weihsien Camp enjoyed a degree of distance from the hostilities of the war as they unfolded that other camps in

Shanghai, Hong Kong or the Philippines did not. Instead of the violence of POW camps, where former combatants from the battlefield regrouped behind enclosures of barbed wire, or the tension of camps nearer the conflict, which were at greater risk of bombing, the prevailing atmosphere at Weihsien was one largely of shared interests between the internees and their captors, opening the door to what some may be tempted to call, erroneously in my view, collaboration.

Despite this superficial tranquillity, the fact remains that the violence of armed conflict lay at the root of the Weihsien community's existence as an internment camp, and reasons for resistance were rife. Accordingly, there were internees who were filled with a sense of resistance against their captors. Augusta Wagner, repatriated on the *Gripsholm* after only a few months in Weihsien, returned to the United States full of vigour. "There must be a complete military defeat of the Japanese military machine," she declared shortly after her arrival home. "It must be utterly crushed and discredited in the eyes of its own people and rendered impotent to hurt them and us in the future."²¹⁹

Under such conditions, Philippe Burrin's notion of accommodation provides a more useful frame of analysis for the Weihsien camp than either collaboration or resistance. As Burrin describes it, accommodation takes place on a community level in the case of

²¹⁹ Augusta Wagner, New York, undated typed letter, "Dear Twenty-four," Wellesley College Archives, Margaret Clapp Library, Wellesley College, Massachusetts. From the contents of the letter, it appears to have been written sometime between her repatriation in 1943 and the commencement of her employment with the American State Department's Far Eastern Branch of the Civilian Internees Section in 1944. Wagner's vituperation stands in contrast to Alice Boring, also formerly at Yenching University and later interned at Weihsien for the same period as Wagner. Boring recalls Weihsien, saying "it was an interesting experiment in communal life and didn't wear on you too much," noting that the Weihsien internees "did not fare badly at the hands of their captors." See "Not Abused by Japanese," *The New York Times*, 11 February 1944, pg 22.

occupation by an enemy power, and can be driven by four motives: “a sense of constraint, material self-interest, personal compliance and ideological connivance.”²²⁰ Like Burrin’s characterisation of the French situation, the internees as a community were undoubtedly motivated by a basic self-interest in seeing basic services managed in an orderly fashion, their own personal safety maintained, and the internal camp ‘economy’ running smoothly.²²¹

In contrast to the French case, which Burrin notes was “tinged with ideological sympathy” for the occupiers,²²² sentiments at Weihsien were almost without exception solidly against the Japanese cause in East Asia, although the nature of the camp community, the geographical location of the camp and the time in which it operated all allowed for an unusual degree of civility to develop over the course of internment. Importantly, the sense of constraint at the camp was greatly magnified by virtue of a not-so-distant horizon trimmed with barbed wire. These motivators—a sense of self-interest and constraint, along with a hostility towards the Japanese cause but not towards individual Japanese, culminated in some of the most defining events at Weihsien.

The bamboo wireless, the black market, and Tipton and Hummel’s escape over the wall have typically been recounted as key acts of resistance and defiance on the part of the camp community. While it is without doubt true that the vast majority of internees opposed the Japanese project in East Asia and eagerly looked forward to the end of the

²²⁰ Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, pg 175.

²²¹ *Ibid*, pg 461.

²²² *Ibid*, pg 175.

war, constituting a sort of ideological resistance to their captors, this spirit of resistance cannot account for these events. Instead, the forms of “resistance” that appeared at Weihsien were tied directly to specific constraints within the camp, guided by self-interest, and were not necessarily a function of the war itself.

In many cases, internees engaged in acts of resistance that grew out of one of the primary points of contention between internees and their captors—food. Faced with rations meant to provide two meals per day, many internees came to rely on food smuggled in by their fellows. Other internees reacted strongly against the isolation of life in the camp and struggled to get news of the outside world, either through clandestine radios or through messages from the nearby Chinese community, using secret messages that came to be known as the bamboo wireless. In this way, internees could maintain communication with the outside world, albeit in an excruciatingly limited fashion.

More dramatic was the moonlight escape from the camp by Laurence Tipton and Arthur Hummel. Taking advantage of a clear night and friendly contacts from a nearby guerrilla unit, the daring pair escaped over the wall and through the barbed wire to take refuge in a nearby village where they orchestrated the delivery of valuable medical supplies into the camp and, on behalf of the internees’ camp committee, politely rejected an offer on the part of local guerrillas to liberate the camp.

But despite the high drama of these events, viewing the history of the Weihsien Camp strictly through the lens of ‘resistance’ is selective at best and runs the risk of veering into

distortion. Thrust into an environment that had been determined solely by their Japanese captors, the Weih sien internees showed a willingness to defy their captors on a case-by-case basis, typically in the interests of the broader camp community or a sense of what was appropriate in regards to their status as internees.

The internees at Weih sien shared a number of common interests with their Japanese captors, including the overall safety and security of the camp, the improvement of conditions such as health, education and diet, as well as the peaceful dissolution of the camp once the war had ended. Admittedly, these shared interests were tempered by a strong sense of resistance that allowed the internees to justify pilfering camp supplies and flouting Japanese authority, be it with regard to bans on smuggling or the ultimate act of escaping.

Such ambiguity cannot be classed as either 'resistance' or 'collaboration.' The Weih sien internees, while successful in utilising their autonomy, could hardly be said to have exercised any real degree of power over the course of the camp, nor did the elements of exploitation and opportunism associated with collaboration appear at Weih sien. While Ward earlier described internees labouring on behalf of the Japanese with the camp committee as middlemen, the situation at Weih sien lacked such exploitation. Instead, the internees reached what can best be called an accommodation with their circumstances, acting in their own interests rather than at the behest of the Japanese, and displaying a willingness to resist their captors where necessary.

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APPENDIX A: IMAGES



Figure 16: "The Children's Playground," courtesy of Christine Talbot Sancton

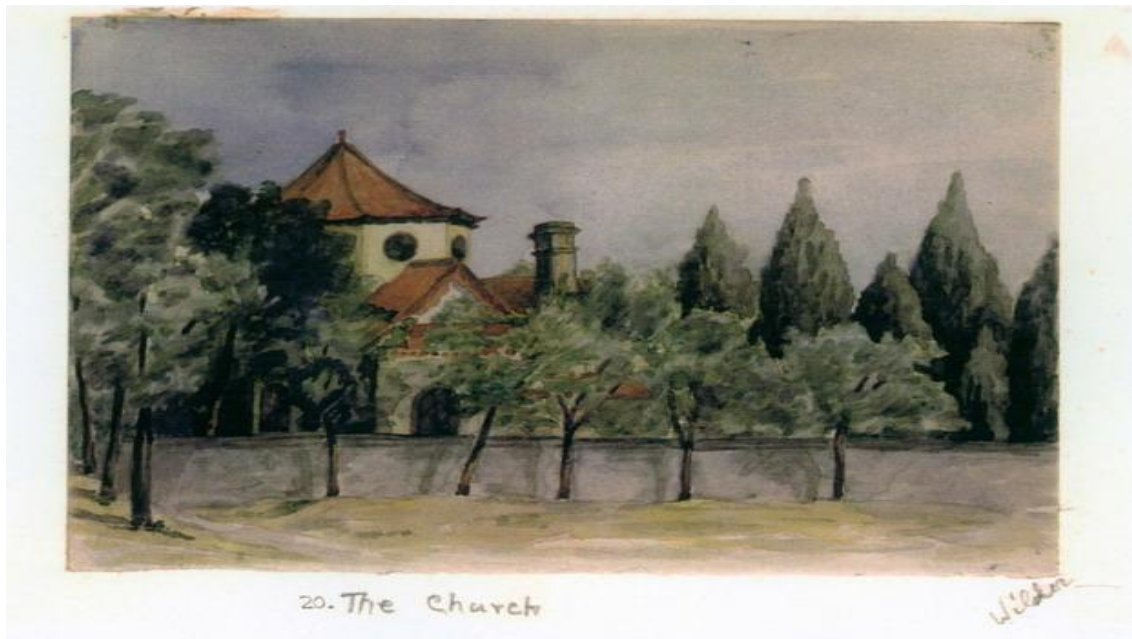


Figure 17: "The Church," by Gertrude Wilder

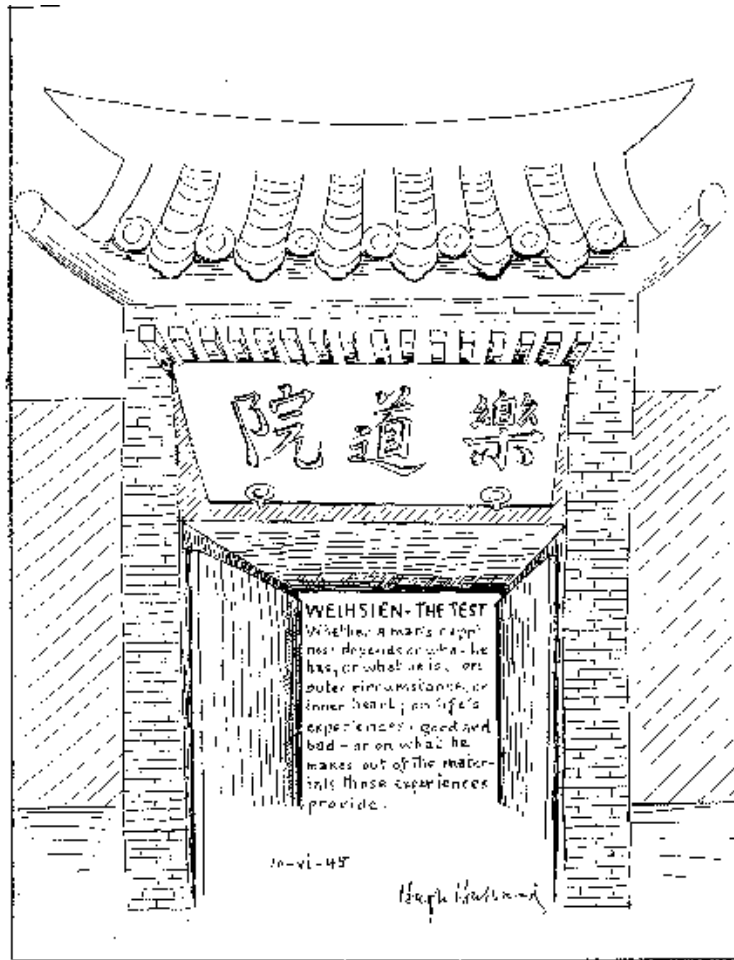


Figure 18: "Courtyard of the Happy Way," by Hugh Hubbard

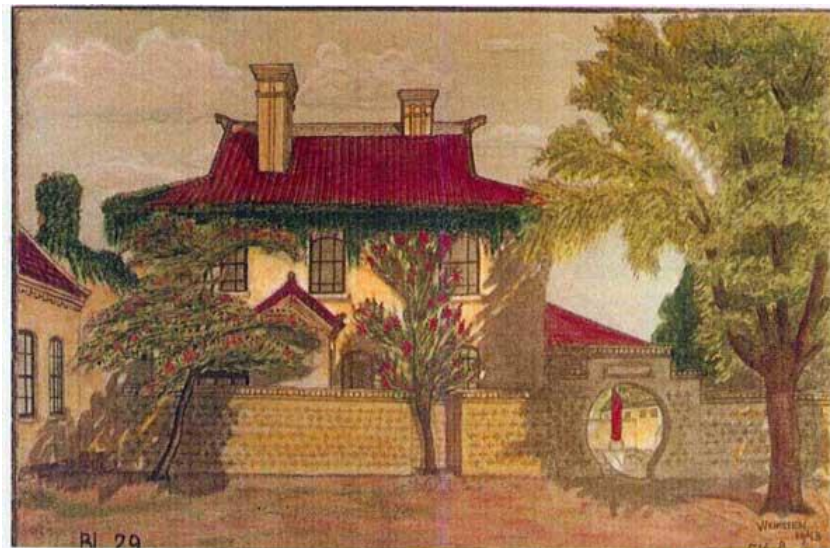



Figure 19: "Headquarters," by Father Verhoeven

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTS

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT AT WEHSIEN



WHAT PRACTICAL SKILLS? ?
HAVE WE CHANGED OUR ATTITUDE TO
OUR PREVIOUS STYLE OF LIVING?
WHAT ABOUT **HOSPITALITY**?
WHAT ABOUT **FRIENDS**?
WHAT ABOUT **RELIGION**?
WHAT ABOUT **FAMILY LIFE**?
WHAT IS THE MOST **VALUABLE FEATURE** ^{CAMP} _{PERKS}

ON MONDAY 9TH APRIL
IN
THE ASSEMBLY HALL
AT 7.45 PM.

AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

COME & HEAR WHAT OTHERS THINK

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

OPEN TO ALL
INCLUDING MEN

ARRANGED BY THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY
IDEAL HOMES EXHIBITION COMMITTEE

Figure 20: "Women's Auxiliary Ideal Homes Exhibition Committee Notice," courtesy of Norman Cliff.

魯蘇戰區挺進第四縱隊司令部公用箋

英美被難諸君均鑒：軸必強盜，破壞世界秩序，救國同胞，危首當其衝，戰禍漫長，犧牲慘烈，中外交頌，無與倫比！倭寇不度德，不量力，竟敢與貴國為敵，致使閣下遭逢大難，剝奪人生幸福，想閣下地獄生活，必極慘酷也。敝人與言及此，不勝髮指！現盟軍在太平洋，在東南亞，於中國大陸，反攻均極得手，應請閣下釋念，敝部目下尚能解救閣下，脫出虎口，但地區狹小，尚不能長期保障，決能營救閣下也。茲託查照，並頌，司令王尚志。

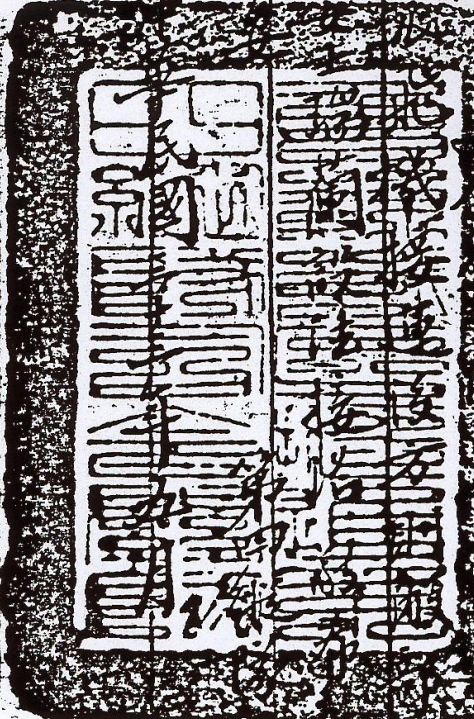


Figure 21: "4th May Letter to 'the Beleguered British and Americans,'" from Nationalist Guerrilla commander Wang Shangzhi, courtesy of Norman Cliff.