

# "Crime" of interpreting

## Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals of World War II

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 <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.122.o8lan>

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Pages 193–224 of

**New Insights in the History of Interpreting**

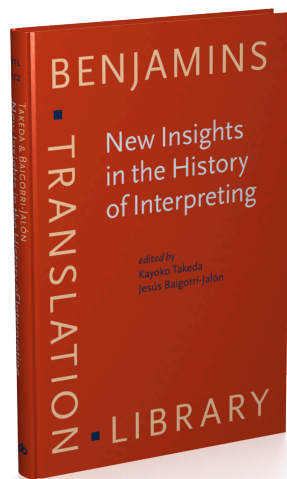
**Edited by Kayoko Takeda and Jesús Baigorri-Jalón**

[Benjamins Translation Library, 122] 2016. xvi, 278 pp.

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## “Crime” of interpreting

### Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals of World War II

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After WWII, 173 Taiwanese who had served in the Japanese army were convicted as war criminals. Among the 21 executed Taiwanese, at least 13 were convicted for crimes committed while working as interpreters, formal or informal, during the war. In addition, a handful of Taiwanese interpreters were sentenced to various prison terms. In the Australian, British, Chinese, Dutch, and US courts established in Asian regions, most of those Taiwanese interpreters were prosecuted for crimes against local civilians and prisoners of war. Some were originally recruited as laborers, but they were assigned to *ad hoc* interpreting duty because of their unique language proficiency and forced into situations where war crimes occurred. They took the responsibility of the Japanese military and suffered the consequences.

**Keywords:** Taiwanese, World War II, war crimes trials, *ad hoc* interpreter, Chinese language

#### 1. Introduction

After World War II ended in 1945, the Allied countries conducted extensive war crimes trials against Germany and Japan. While the postwar trials of Class A<sup>1</sup> war criminals, namely the Nuremberg Trial and the Tokyo Trial, continue to attract a good deal of scholarly attention more than half a century after the trials,<sup>2</sup> the

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1. War crimes were categorized as Class A (crimes against peace), Class B (war crimes), and Class C (crimes against humanity).

2. For example, see works on the Nuremberg Trial by Davidson (1997), Gaiba (1998), Harris (1999), Mettraux (2008), and Baigorri-Jalón (2014/2000). For the Tokyo Trial, see Maga (2001), Totani (2009), and Takeda (2010). Interest in the Tokyo Trial is further extended by accounts of persons involved in the trial; see for example Sprecher (1999), Ehrenfreund (2007), and Fischel (2009).

trials of Class BC war criminals have been relatively understudied.<sup>3</sup> In spite of their much larger number – more than 4,400 people were convicted (Hōmu-daijin kanbō shihō hōsei chōsa-bu (1973: 266–269), Class BC war criminals have received disproportionately little attention in the academia.

Among the Japanese Class BC war criminals, it is particularly worth noting – though often neglected – that there were a significant number of former colonial subjects, namely Taiwanese (Formosans) and Koreans who served in the Japanese military during the war. According to existing documents, 173 Taiwanese were convicted in war crimes trials after the war. Among these Taiwanese war criminals (TWCs), 26 were sentenced to death and 21 were consequently executed.<sup>4</sup> In comparison, the “Name List of Korean- and Taiwanese-native War Criminals,” a record compiled by the Bureau of Repatriation and Emergency Aid of Japan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare (Kōsei-shō) in 1955 (hereafter, MHW Name List), indicates that there were a total of 148 Korean war criminals, among them 23 were sentenced to death (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955: 4).<sup>5</sup>

It was reported that during the war more than 80,000 Taiwanese were recruited or mobilized by the Japanese colonial and military authorities to serve as soldiers, and more than 126,000 Taiwanese served as “military servants” and “civilian military personnel.” Among them, there were more than 30,000 casualties (Cai 2006: 121). It would be fair to conclude that by the end of the war, more than 200,000 Taiwanese had fought – as “Japanese” – for the Empire and the Emperor of Japan in World War II. The Japanese wartime mobilization of the

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3. A few exceptions include works by Piccigallo (1979) and Lyon (2000).

4. The number of TWCs sentenced to death is given as 26 in most accounts; see Zhong (2001: 262) and Li (2005: 4–6). However, it should be noted that the Japanese source quoted by Zhong further explains that five of the 26 TWCs recorded as “dead” were those who died of illness or suicide during imprisonment. See Tokyo Saiban Handbook Editorial Board (1989: 225). This account is confirmed by the MHW Name List (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955), in which two under the Australian jurisdiction were listed as “death from accident,” one under the Australian jurisdiction was listed as “death from illness,” one under the Australian jurisdiction was listed as “death from suicide” and one under the Chinese jurisdiction was listed as “death from illness” (36–38). Thereby, this study confirms that 26 TWCs were recorded as “dead,” and among them 21 were actually executed. It should be further noted that, as this chapter will further explain in the later section on the Australian trials, five TWCs who were sentenced to death were commuted to life imprisonment in 1947, and thereby spared of death. With the other 21 TWCs who were executed, this study confirms that the total number of TWCs *sentenced to death* is 26.

5. The number is identical to the number given in other scholarly works; see Utsumi (1982: ii) and Tokyo Saiban Handbook Editorial Board (1989: 225).

Taiwanese certainly constituted part of what Fujitani (2011) has called “politics of disavowal.” In comparison to their Japanese and Korean counterparts, the history of Taiwanese mobilized by the Japanese is rather understudied, if not ignored,<sup>6</sup> and Taiwanese who had served in the Japanese military remain, to paraphrase from Bayly and Harper (2005), the “forgotten armies” of the War. Yet, it was among these Taiwanese that more than 170 were put on trial and subsequently convicted as war criminals after the conflict.

Not surprisingly, the history of TWCs has drawn very little attention so far.<sup>7</sup> Based on the records available today, TWCs were prosecuted at military tribunals by five Allied countries: Australia, the Republic of China (ROC), the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Among them, Australia convicted the largest number of Taiwanese war criminals (95), followed by the ROC (41), the United Kingdom (26), the Netherlands (7), and the US/the Philippines (4) (*Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* 1955:4).

Earlier studies have pointed out that most of the TWCs had worked as camp guards of the Allied prisoners of war (POWs) in Southeast Asia during the wartime (Zhong 2001:262; Li 2005:6–7). And it has been further pointed out that eight of these Taiwanese camp guards who were tried as war criminals were sentenced to death.<sup>8</sup> The MHW Name List also confirms that the majority of Taiwanese (and Korean) war criminals had served as POW camp guards (*Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* 1955:2), followed by “interpreters” working for the *Kempeitai* (Japanese military police), and then “civilians.”

However, a closer look at the MHW Name List shows a rather unusual situation: in terms of the wartime job designation and profile of those TWCs who were sentenced to death, the group of “interpreters” is the most significant: a total of eleven Taiwanese who were formally designated as “interpreters” were sentenced to death and consequently executed. In comparison, five other executed TWCs

6. Most studies are oral history published in Chinese in the 1990s; see Zheng (1995), Chou (1997), Pan (1997), Ts'ai (Cai) (1997), and Tang and Chen (2001). In addition, a handful of scholarly works have studied this topic; see Chou (2002) and Cai (2006). And only a few works are available for the English-speaking readers; see Chen (2003) and Huang (2001). For studies of this “ignorance” in historiography and its significance in postwar Taiwan, see Lan (2013).

7. Zhong Shumin has written several works on this topic; see Zhong (2001) and Zhong (2009). In addition, Li Zhanping has conducted extensive interview with former Taiwanese who served in the Japanese military, and published two books based on oral history; see Li (2005) and Li (2007).

8. The number is eight from a chart compiled by Zhong Shumin, based on 3 different works of war crime documents compiled by Japanese scholar Yoshio Chaen; see Zhong (2001:280–281).

were POW camp guards, three were civilian military personnel who worked at a military depot, two were police officers, and one was a businessman.<sup>9</sup>

While existing scholarship and oral history have provided a better understanding of Taiwanese who had served as POW camp guards,<sup>10</sup> very few scholarly works have examined the Taiwanese “interpreters” in military service.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, so far no work on war crimes has studied or provided any explanation to the high number of former “interpreters” convicted as war criminals. While the killing and/or ill-treatment of the Allied POWs has been identified as the major reason behind the death sentence handed down to most Taiwanese camp guards,<sup>12</sup> no reason has been clearly identified to explain the death sentence handed down to Taiwanese “interpreters.” Zhong Shumin (2009) points out, in her most recent work on POW camps and Taiwanese camp guards, that many Taiwanese interpreters were prosecuted and later received severe sentences in war crimes trials in China, Indonesia (Dutch courts), and Malaya (British courts). Zhong (*ibid.*: 5–7) further identifies that the charges against these interpreters were often recorded in the available fragmented court records simply as “ill-treatment” or “killing” of local residents. But what exactly did these “interpreters” do during the war to be indicted as war criminals and sentenced to death in some cases? Why and in what context did these “interpreters” change their job responsibilities from undertaking the task of interpreting, supposedly between the Japanese forces and local residents, to committing “ill-treatment” or “killing” of local civilians? This chapter will utilize archival materials to further study Taiwanese wartime interpreters and their activities.

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9. The number of executed former POW camp guards adds up to five (one by the United States, and eight sentenced to death by Australia but only four were executed); see Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku (1955: 4, 36–38).

10. For works in Chinese, see Zhong (2001), Li (2005), and Zhong (2009). In comparison, there are many more Japanese works on the topic of Koreans serving as POW camp guards during the war; see note 5.

11. A few exceptions include Xu (2006), which studies the general condition of Taiwanese serving as interpreters during the Japanese colonial period, and Chen (2013), which studies the identity struggle of several Taiwanese wartime interpreters.

12. See personal accounts and recollections by former TWCs in Li (2005). Scholars also made the same conclusion based on court records and archival materials; see Li (2005), Zhong (2001) and Zhong (2009).

## 2. Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals

As a land of many waves of immigrants and foreign rulers, Taiwan has been a crossroads of cultural and language interactions since the ancient times. With its aboriginal population of Austronesian origin (consisting of more than a dozen major tribes, each with its own distinct language), the Chinese migrants (consisting of many distinct “dialect” groups from various parts of southern China) from the 16th to the 19th century, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Japanese, and the second major wave of Chinese migrants after 1945, the “language-landscape” of Taiwan has been highly diversified and evolving over time. Expectedly, there has been a constant need for, and thereby a great deal of stories about, interpreting in Taiwanese history. But so far, little has been written about interpreters in Taiwan, not to mention Taiwanese who performed interpreting in military operation during wartime.

Interpreters in history have been attracting some scholarly attention. Many – if not most – interpreters who were recognized and studied by scholars, were individuals who interpreted for “great men,” such as the interpreters of Napoleon, George Washington, and Woodrow Wilson (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 267, 270). Some were themselves close to become “great men” as they also served as diplomats (*ibid.*: 269–272) since “[i]nterpreting and diplomacy have tended to overlap” (*ibid.*: 274). However, interpreters have been present and needed in many other occasions through history. In times of war, for example, interpreters were deployed long before diplomatic efforts were made to settle conflicts, and long after military conflicts were ceased. They were indispensable in the occupation of a foreign land (and its people), in interrogation of enemy soldiers, and in intelligence activity, just to name a few examples. These unique features have recently led to scholarly interest in studying wartime interpreters – particularly in relation to politics of language, identity, and justice – in the contexts of Asia, Europe, and elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> But similar to the “unknown soldiers,” wartime interpreters were often forgotten and became unknown once the war ended, and thereby hardly recorded, recognized, or studied.

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13. See recent studies by Salama-Carr (2007) and Footitt and Kelly (2012), particularly Part IV. Alice Kaplan has produced two fascinating accounts of military interpreters in France in World War II; see Kaplan (2005) and Guilloux (Kaplan, trans.) (2003). For studies of wartime interpreters in the Asian context of wars, see Ahn (2002), Kim and Kim Nelson (2008), and Takeda (2010).

## 2.1 Overview of Taiwanese wartime interpreters and war crimes trials

In light of the issue of military and language, this study will discuss two groups of Taiwanese wartime interpreters who were convicted as war criminals after the war. Group 1 consists of Taiwanese who had formal interpreter status during the war. They were officially designated as “interpreters” (*tsuyaku* in Japanese) in Japanese official documents.<sup>14</sup> This group was mainly made up of those Taiwanese who served as interpreters under the *Kempeitai*. After the war, many were prosecuted in British, Dutch, and Chinese courts; some were sentenced to death and executed, and others were sentenced to various prison terms. Group 2 consists of Taiwanese who had informal or *ad hoc* interpreting duty during the war. They were Taiwanese originally recruited and designated not as formal “interpreters” in military service, but reassigned – because of their language proficiency – to perform interpreting under the contingency in battlefields. Similar to Group 1, those in Group 2 were prosecuted in war crimes trials after the war, and several were sentenced to death and executed.

As mentioned earlier, 11 out of the 21 executed TWCs had the job classification of “interpreters”; among them, six were convicted and executed by the United Kingdom, three by the ROC, and two by the Netherlands (Kōsei-shō hikiage engokyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968). In the British trials, in addition to the six Taiwanese interpreters convicted and executed between 1946 and 1948, there were three more Taiwanese interpreters sentenced to imprisonment of six months, three years, and eight years respectively. In the ROC trials a total of five TWCs were convicted and executed, three of them interpreters. In the Dutch trials a total of two TWCs were convicted and executed, and both of them were interpreters. These numbers show that the conviction rate with death sentence was very high among Group 1 (Taiwanese with formal interpreter status).

In terms of specific deployment of the six executed Taiwanese interpreters in the British trials, three had served with the Penang *Kempeitai*; one had served with the Kuala Lumpur *Kempeitai*; one had served in the military forces in Car Nicobar Island; and the last one had served with the police force in Kuala Besut, Malaya (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968). The other three interpreters sentenced to various terms of imprisonment in the British trials had served respectively with the *Kempeitai* in Penang, Borneo, and Singapore (Chaen 1989: 117, 133, 164). Conspicuously, Taiwanese who served as formal wartime interpreters were closely associated with the *Kempeitai*.

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14. This study uses the term *tsuyaku*, instead of *tsuyakusha*, which is more widely used today, to refer to interpreters because these Taiwanese were listed as 通訳 (*tsuyaku*) in relevant archival documents.

It is well recognized that during World War II the *Kempeitai* was widely deployed in the Japanese-occupied areas and in charge of maintaining “social order,” more often than not through means of terror against local residents. According to the rather limited records of the British trials available today, the alleged crimes of TWCs were mostly ill-treatment and torture of local civilian residents. Among the six interpreters executed by the British, those three with the Penang *Kempeitai* were accused of “torturing, interrogating, and causing death of local residents” in Penang and “interrogating and causing death of civilians” in Taiping (Chaen 1988: 112–113); the one with the Kuala Lumpur *Kempeitai* was accused of “interrogating local residents” (Chaen 1988: 121); the one with the military forces in Car Nicobar Island was accused of “torturing, interrogating, and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1989: 159–160); and the one with the police force in Malaya was accused of “torturing and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1988: 123). As for the other three interpreters sentenced to various terms of imprisonment: the one with the Penang *Kempeitai* was accused of “torturing local residents” (Chaen 1988: 117); the one with the Borneo *Kempeitai* was accused of “torturing Chinese” (Chaen 1988: 133); and while the alleged crime of the one with the Singapore *Kempeitai* was not specified in the available records (Chaen 1989: 164), it is reasonable to assume, based on the typical activities of the *Kempeitai*, that the alleged crime also concerned local residents.

The cases of Taiwanese interpreters convicted as war criminals in the British trials clearly show that the job as interpreters brought these Taiwanese into close contact with local residents during the war, and their alleged crimes – and the consequence of conviction (and in some cases, execution) – mostly resulted from their involvement with local residents. The same was also found in the Dutch and ROC trials. One of the two Taiwanese interpreters executed by the Dutch was convicted in a Batavia trial for crimes committed in “organized terror in interrogation of civilians” and “interrogating and supervising civilians” using “inhumane means” while he was serving with the *Kempeitai* (Chaen 1992: 93; Sugamo hōmu iinkai 1981: 100). The other was convicted in a Medan trial for crimes committed in the “mistreatment of suspects, organized terror” against, most likely, local residents, while he was with the *Kempeitai* (Sugamo hōmu iinkai 1981: 118). In the ROC trials, one of the three Taiwanese interpreters executed had served with the Guangdong Navy *Kempeitai*, and was convicted with “illegal arrest, confinement, torturing, and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1984: 175); and another one had served with the South China Army *Kempeitai* (Chaen 1984: 179).



## 2.2 Training and activities of interpreters

Further archival research on the British, Dutch, and Chinese trial records is needed to examine more details and provide a fuller picture of each of those Taiwanese interpreters. At the moment, this study relies on secondary sources to study individual cases. One of the better-studied TWCs/interpreters is Muneharu Yasuda.<sup>15</sup> Yasuda was recruited into the Japanese military in November 1941, specifically as an “interpreter of Annanese (Vietnamese)” with the rank of *gun-zoku* (military auxiliary personnel; civilian personnel employed in the military) (Kimura 2010: 39, 43). He was first deployed in Malaya, then in Sumatra, and was stationed in Car Nicobar Island, an island of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean toward the end of the war (*ibid.*: 15–17, 44–45). After Japan surrendered, Yasuda was arrested for alleged war crimes and sent to Singapore for trial. He was convicted by the British court there and sentenced to death in March 1946; he was executed in May 1946 (*ibid.*: 16–17).

Thanks to earlier research done by Japanese scholar Kōichirō Kimura, we are able to get a glimpse of the training before deployment and the actual activities and experiences of a Taiwanese military interpreter in the battlefields through Yasuda’s case, particularly based on the trial records held at the Public Record Office in London. Records retrieved by Kimura show that Yasuda was born in a village near Taipei in 1907, given the Chinese name of Lai Enqin. In 1941, at the Southern Association in Taiwan, Yasuda attended elementary-level Annanese classes in March and completed the classes in July; then he moved on to enroll in middle-level Annanese classes and Malay language classes in August, before being recruited as an “interpreter of Annanese (Vietnamese)” by the Japanese military in November (*ibid.*: 38–39). His experiences before deployment show that in addition to the native language of Taiwanese (Chinese dialects of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka) and the schooling language of Japanese (as Taiwan was under Japan’s colonial rule at the time), Taiwanese interpreters such as Lai/Yasuda were trained and then assigned to interpret non-native languages as well. The inclusion of non-native languages, such as Annanese and Malay, in training clearly indicates Japan’s effort to utilize Taiwanese in fulfilling the language needs of its “advance-ment into the South (*nanshin*)” and Southeast Asia. What is more significant is the timing of Yasuda’s training, which started at the height of Japan’s military invasion of French Indochina (from September 1940 to July 1941) and just nine months before Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. Clearly, the training of Taiwanese

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15. Unless noted otherwise, information about Yasuda is quoted from the Chinese edition of Kimura (translated by Pengren Chen) (2010). For Japanese original, see Kimura (2001).

interpreters was conducted in preparation for Japan's larger military operation throughout the Asia-Pacific.

Trial records further shed light on Yasuda's wartime activities as an interpreter in Car Nicobar Island. Most notably, Yasuda was assigned to take part in the interrogations – and consequently accused of committing war crime of “ill-treatment” – of local “civilian residents” who were suspected of espionage in July and August 1945 (*ibid.*: 136, 146). According to the testimony by an accused Japanese sergeant in the postwar trial in Singapore, Yasuda was the only interpreter who was present at all three rounds of interrogations in which the alleged “ill-treatment” occurred (*ibid.*: 151–152).<sup>16</sup>

As Delisle and Woodsworth (1995: 273) point out in the case of German interpreter Eugen Dollmann, who served as interpreter between Hitler and Mussolini in World War II, Dollmann “took pains to point out that he was made a member of the SS without having being consulted.” In his own words, Dollmann recalled, “I woke up one morning... to find myself in the SS” (*ibid.*). In many cases, interpreters may be forced into a situation beyond their control or without their consent. In his own testimony, Yasuda admitted his involvement in the interrogations of civilian residents (Kimura *ibid.*: 209–211); and he was convicted of murder (*ibid.*: 229). Whether or not a war criminal like Yasuda was given a fair trial is not the major concern of this chapter. What this study intends to show, based on the case of Yasuda and other Taiwanese interpreters convicted of war crimes, is how interpreters may be forced into a situation where they have very little control over their action, especially in the context of wars. While the status or job designation as an interpreter alone did not lead to the conviction or execution of any TWCs, it was nevertheless a critical factor that led and forced many Taiwanese interpreters such as Yasuda into a situation in which they were in close contact with local residents in Southeast Asia under Japan's military occupation and, subsequently (if not consequently), into situations in which the (alleged) war crimes were committed against local civilians. Thereby, the status or job designation as interpreters was, at least partially, connected to the conviction and execution of some TWCs.

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16. It should be noted that the testimony by one witness indicates Yasuda conducted interrogations in English; see Kimura (*ibid.*: 147). If this was true, it demonstrates a rather unique situation of a Taiwanese interpreter, who was not specifically trained to interpret a given language (in Yasuda's case, English) but was nevertheless trusted with the task of interpreting this given language under the contingency in the battlefields. This kind of *ad hoc* task of interpreting assigned to the Taiwanese will be further discussed in a later section of this chapter.

### 2.3 Returning colonial powers and war crimes trials

Cases of interpreters on trial in Southeast Asia, such as Yasuda's, can also be examined in a larger context: the postwar return of former colonial powers and the rise of anti-colonial voices. During the war, Japan's conquest of Western colonies in Southeast Asia – or in the eyes of the colonized people, the sudden surrender and collapse of Western powers – made many realize how fragile colonial powers were and how little they could do when the colonies and the colonized people were under threat. It would be fair to argue that the anti-colonial sentiment rose along with Japan's military expansion across Southeast Asia. Thereby, for the Western colonial powers returning to regain control of their colonies in Southeast Asia after the war, one of the top priorities was to reestablish and assert their legitimacy and authority as rulers.

Under these circumstances, conducting war crimes trials in which the victims were exclusively and explicitly the colonized people became a rather public and immediate means for the returning colonial powers to re-claim and prove their legitimacy in ruling their former colonies. On the one hand, the returning authorities were acting to punish the Japanese aggressors who had invaded the colonies, as a way of reestablishing and exercising their sovereignty over the former colonies. On the other hand, they were acting and pursuing justice on behalf of the colonized. This is particularly critical in view of their humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese less than four years earlier and the rising anti-colonial sentiment and action throughout Southeast Asia at that time. The collapse of empires was well underway even before the war ended; due to this crisis, colonial governments returning to Southeast Asia were eager to adopt any means to hold on to their powers immediately after the war. Therefore, postwar trials for war crimes committed against “local residents” or “native population” became one of the most immediate and effective ways for the returning powers to reestablish their ruling legitimacy in colonies throughout Southeast Asia.

Equally important was the location of these trials. By conducting them in the colonies, instead of extraditing the accused Class BC war criminals to an imperial capital such as London, or to an international military tribunal like the one against Class A war criminals in Tokyo, the colonial authorities intentionally kept these trials physically close (and thereby relevant) to the colonized subjects. In doing so, they became one of the most visible ways (or “rituals”) – in the eyes of both the colonial governments and the colonized – of demonstrating the legitimacy and authority of the returning Western colonial powers.

In the immediate postwar Southeast Asia, the most common practice of identifying war criminals was to conduct a “survey” and hold a “parade” of Japanese suspects, in which local residents were asked to identify those who had committed

any alleged crime against them during the war. In such procedures, wartime interpreters, who often had the most direct and frequent contact with the local residents, became the most identifiable targets. Under these circumstances, the Taiwanese who served as interpreters between the Japanese military authorities and the local residents soon became one of the most conspicuous targets for prosecution.

Furthermore, in comparison to their Japanese counterparts, Taiwanese interpreters were at a higher risk of being identified by the local residents, especially the Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia. Not only did the Taiwanese speak the language of these local residents, they also shared common cultural heritage. Most Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia could trace their origin back to provinces in southeastern China, and so did the Taiwanese. During the war, having been ordered to serve as interpreters, the Taiwanese were able to communicate with Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia because of such common ground. But when local residents came out to identify war criminals after the war, the Taiwanese became an obvious target for the local Chinese for two specific reasons. First, they were much more recognizable than the Japanese to the Chinese Overseas because of their shared backgrounds. And secondly, since the Taiwanese were working for the Japanese occupation against local Chinese during the war, they were often seen as “traitors” and worse than the Japanese. Therefore, in the process of identifying war crime suspects, the Taiwanese became a major target of local Chinese seeking revenge. It should be noted that trials of “traitors” or for “treason” were common in China, the United States, and France after World War II,<sup>17</sup> and the postwar Chinese authorities also dealt with the trials of Taiwanese as “traitors” (Lo 2001). But in these cases, the alleged “traitors” were put on trial by the government of their own country. The case of the Taiwanese discussed here is more complicated and rather unique, as they were seen as “traitors” by the Chinese Overseas but were put on trial – under the colonial context in Southeast Asia – by a third party, the returning Western colonial authorities.

## 2.4 Special “connection” with local Chinese

The special “connection” between the Chinese Overseas and the Taiwanese was particularly relevant to one TWC mentioned earlier in the British trials, as he was convicted specifically for the crime of “interrogation of mostly Chinese” (Chaen 1988: 133). But the same could be said about several other TWCs convicted in the

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17. For studies of Chinese traitors, often known as *Hanjian* (traitors to the Han (Chinese) people), who collaborated with the Japanese during the war, see Wakeman (2000) and Brook (2005). In the US, the trial of John Provoost was the best example; see Kushner (2010). For the trial of Vichy personnel, see Conan and Rouso (N. Bracher, trans.) (1998).

British courts in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, who had their names recorded in court documents in their original Chinese forms, as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect (also known as Minnan or Hokkien), instead of in their adopted Japanese names.

A brief explanation on the significance of Taiwanese names under the Japanese colonial rule, and particularly during the wartime, is needed here. As militarism intensified in Japan in the 1930s, total mobilization of the population was expanded from the mainland to the colonies of Taiwan and Korea. To mobilize the colonized people for Japan's war efforts, a policy called "*kōminka*," intended to make the colonial subjects into imperial subjects, was widely implemented and forced upon people of the colonies. One of the key points of *kōminka* was "*kaiseimei*" (name-changing) – demanding colonial subjects in Taiwan and Korea to adopt Japanese names. While the Japanese colonial policy of *kaiseimei* encountered a certain degree of resistance from the public and was not thoroughly implemented in the colonies, it was common for colonial subjects who were mobilized to work in the Japanese military to adopt Japanese names. In Taiwan, *kaiseimei* was done only "by application." Initially, permission for name changes was granted only to Taiwanese who met certain qualifications specified by the colonial authorities. However, toward the end of the war, the qualifications – particularly for those Taiwanese serving in the military – were practically removed and permission would be granted upon application.<sup>18</sup> Therefore it would be fair to argue that it was the colonial government that encouraged Taiwanese to adopt Japanese names.

From the Japanese government's point of view, apart from the ideological reason of forging allegiance to the Japanese Empire, demanding colonial subjects such as the Taiwanese to change their names to Japanese also had a practical side for military operation.<sup>19</sup> Chinese names, while written in characters that are comprehensible in reading to the Japanese, are pronounced completely different in their original Chinese language from the way pronounced in Japanese. The same characters as pronounced in Chinese would be difficult, if not impossible, for Japanese to understand and pronounce; likewise, for Chinese the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese characters would be impossible to understand and pronounce. Thereby, for those Taiwanese serving in various capacities in the Japanese military, it was common to adopt Japanese names. For example, TWCs convicted in the Australian trials, as this chapter will discuss later, universally used adopted Japanese names.

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18. The policy of *kaiseimei* started in Taiwan in February 1940. But by the end of 1943, only 126,000 Taiwanese, or 2% of the population, changed their names to Japanese. See Cai (2006: 53–54).

19. I would like to thank Professor Hsiang-jung Chin for this point.

In comparison, in at least three cases in the British trials in Penang and another three cases in Kuala Lumpur, the accused TWCs – all had served as formal interpreters for the *Kempeitai* – were identified and recorded in court documents with their original Chinese names as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect and not with their Japanese names. In the Penang trials, the names of three TWCs who were convicted and executed appear in the Japanese records only in *kanji* (Chinese characters) of their original Chinese names (as 郭張興, 楊樹木, 許祺禪 respectively); and no Japanese names were given (Chaen 1988: 112–113). In British records, their names were recorded respectively as Kwek Tiong Hin, Yeow Chew Bok, and Khor Kee Sian; each of them consisted of exactly the three characters of the original Chinese name as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.<sup>20</sup> In the Kuala Lumpur trials, one TWC/interpreter was convicted and executed; in the Japanese record, his name was recorded only in *kanji* of his original Chinese name (鄭錦樹) (Chaen 1988: 121). In the British records, his name was recorded as Ten Ten Chuan, which was fairly close to the three characters of his original Chinese name as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.<sup>21</sup> In addition, in the Kuala Lumpur trials, two other TWCs/interpreters were recorded with names that could only be pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.<sup>22</sup>

It may be possible that the aforementioned six TWCs in the British trials simply did not have Japanese names (i.e. they had never applied for *kaiseimei*), thereby could only have their names recorded in their original Chinese forms. But for the ideological and practical reasons discussed above, it is highly unlikely that these TWCs did not have Japanese names. If so, the reason for having their names recorded in trial documents as spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect could be that their accusers identified them in that dialect. According to the Japanese records, all the TWCs discussed in this section had served with the *Kempeitai* and were accused of crime against “local residents.” Since the local Chinese were the only persons who would and could identify the TWCs in their

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20. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Kwek Tiong Hin Place of Trial: Penang); Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Yeow Chew Bok Place of Trial: Penang); Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Khor Kee Sian Place of Trial: Penang).

21. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/949 (Description: Defendant: Ten Ten Chuan Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur).

22. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/1059 (Description: Defendant: Cheah Kam-Sang Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur); Reference: WO 235/1026 (Description: Defendant: Ee-Fook-Seong Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur; Date: 1947 Aug. 19–Oct. 26).

original Chinese names as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect, it would be fair to assume that in these cases “local residents” – who were victims in the alleged crime and subsequently became accusers of the TWCs in the trials – were Chinese Overseas. Therefore, for a fuller understanding of “Group 1” TWCs/interpreters, either in their wartime activities or in post-war trials, it is important to recognize this context involving Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia and their special “connection” with the Taiwanese.

## 2.5 *Ad hoc* interpreters

While Group 1 consists of Taiwanese who had formal interpreter status during the war, Group 2 represents Taiwanese who had informal or *ad hoc* interpreting duty during the war. They were originally recruited and designated not as interpreters, but were assigned – because of their unique language proficiency – to perform interpreting under the contingency of war. As we explore further into archival documents related to the 21 executed TWCs, it becomes apparent that several of them not listed as “interpreters” in official court records were actually performing the role of interpreters during the war and, subsequently, were prosecuted and punished after the war for what they had done as informal or *ad hoc* interpreters.

More specifically, Group 2 includes several TWCs who originally served as laborers or POW camp guards during the war and subsequently sentenced to death in the Australian courts. As trial records indicate, they did interpret during the war, and most importantly, they did so while engaging in the alleged war crimes.<sup>23</sup> One of the most notable examples of Group 2 Taiwanese wartime interpreters is found in the trial of “Chinese POW killing,” which was conducted by the Australian court in Rabaul in 1946.<sup>24</sup> The alleged war crime in this trial was

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23. It is worth pointing out that based on the available records, Australia is the most significant country in the trials of Taiwanese war criminals. In terms of the sheer number, Australian courts convicted the highest number of TWCs among all the Allied countries, a total of 95; among them seven were sentenced to death and executed (which is also the highest among all Allied nations). See Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku (1955). The number adds up to 109, according to Chaen (1990) and Chaen (1991).

24. Gaimu-shō tōan, kōwa jōyaku hakko-go: Shamen kankoku kankei, Australia-no Bu [Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive (JMFA): After the Peace Treaty became effective, on the issue of pardon and appeal: Australia], D-1-3-0-3-9-2a: 376–438. According to this record, in the trial one Japanese Sergeant, one Japanese Corporal, two members of the Taiwanese Volunteer Corps were sentenced to death by hanging and executed on July 17, 1946; five other members of the Taiwanese Volunteer Corps were sentenced to death by hanging but commuted to life imprisonment on July 4, 1947.



the killing in 1943 of Chinese POWs from the 88th Division, the 3rd Army, of the Chinese National Army. They were captured by the Japanese forces in China in July 1942,<sup>25</sup> and subsequently sent to Rabaul in January 1943.<sup>26</sup> Afterwards, in two separate occasions around March 3 and 11, 1943, a number of Chinese POWs (reportedly 24 in the first occasion, and six in the second) were shot and killed, allegedly by Japanese soldiers and Taiwanese guards. In this trial, two Japanese soldiers and seven Taiwanese guards were charged for the killing and all the accused were sentenced to “death by hanging” on April 16, 1946.<sup>27</sup>

The seven convicted TWCs were<sup>28</sup>: Hajime Hayashi (AWC 2683); Takeo Kiohara (*sic*, Kiyohara) (AWC 2913); Eikyu Okabayashi (AWC 2685); Uetane Yanagawa (AWC 2914); Yuzo Shimura (AWC 2911); Eisuke Furuya (AWC 2912); and Tsuruichi Takabayashi (*sic*, Takebayashi) (AWC 2684).

After the trial Hajime Hayashi and Takeo Kiohara, together with the two convicted Japanese soldiers, were hanged on July 17, 1946. As for Okabayashi, Yanagawa, Shimura, Furuya, and Takabayashi, their lives were spared as they were required to serve as witnesses in other war crime trials. Their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment on June 27, 1947.<sup>29</sup>

From the trial records, we can learn more about these TWCs’ work as well as the crimes they were accused of committing. One of the defense witnesses, Major Lee Wai Sing of the Chinese Nationalist Army, testified, “Each of the seven Formosans accused used either rifles or revolvers and shot into the pit” in which a group of sick Chinese POWs was ordered to go into on March 3, 1943; he added that the accused Taiwanese did the same thing again on March 11, 1943.<sup>30</sup> Another defense witness, Lieutenant Wong Yu Shing, testified that from the time of the arrival of Chinese POWs in Rabaul in January 1943 to the time of the killing in March 1943, “the people who controlled [the Chinese POWs] all the time were

25. Court testimony by Captain Liu Wei Pao, 10th April, 1946, in Proceedings of Military Tribunal, Sgt. Matsushima, Tozaburo and others, Department of the Army, A471.80915, Australian National Archive.

26. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

27. Record of Military Court, Court, Place, Date and Formation: Rabaul, 10–16 Apr (19)46, 8 MD, in A471.80915.

28. Memorandum for Judge Advocate General, 14 May, 1947, in A471.80915. AWC was the identification number given to each war criminal by the Australian authorities.

29. Record of Military Court, Court, Place, Date and Formation: Rabaul, 10–16 Apr (19)46, 8 MD, in A471.80915; the “commuted sentences (were) promulgated to (the) accused (on) 12 July 1947.”

30. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915



the accused.”<sup>31</sup> From these testimonies it is clear that the accused TWCs were assigned to be in charge of overseeing Chinese POWs and subsequently involved in the killing of some of them.

But during the trial, several Chinese officers also testified as witnesses that the Taiwanese were usually unarmed. When asked “[h]ow many Formosans brought weapons with them to the camp” on the first occasion of the killing, defense witness Captain Liu Wei Pao testified, “As far as I remember the Formosans were not carrying arms when they entered our camp”; and the answer was the same when Captain Liu was asked about the second occasion of killing.<sup>32</sup> Major Lee Wai Sing also testified that with the exception of one Formosan, “the only time the [other Formosans] were armed was during the shooting.”<sup>33</sup> A Japanese witness, Paymaster Major Masaomi Shimazaki, who was “in charge of general affairs” of the 26th Supply Depot, further testified in court that “[Formosans] were not given any military training, they were used wholly as labourers” and the use of firearm was never explained to the Formosans.<sup>34</sup>

The above testimonies show that the Taiwanese were originally deployed as laborers; they were not given combatant training or duties; and they were originally not deployed for any assignment related to Chinese POWs. Their job designations, as recorded in Japanese government sources such as the MHW Name List, were members of the Taiwanese Special Labor Volunteer Corps.<sup>35</sup> Attached to the 26th Depot in Rabaul (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968), these Taiwanese laborers were engaged in the unloading, transporting and collecting of military supplies. So, why did these Taiwanese laborers end up being assigned to “control” and supervise other laborers such as the Chinese POWs in Rabaul? The answer, as shown in the trial records, was their language proficiency.

## 2.6 “Chinese” proficiency

In the Australian trial records, language proficiency was repeatedly identified by the accused TWCs as a critical factor leading to their involvement with the Chinese POWs and in the alleged war crimes. The first Taiwanese on the list of the

31. Court testimony by Lt. Wong Yu Shing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

32. Court testimony by Captain Liu Wei Pao, 10th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

33. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

34. Court testimony by Paymaster Major Shimizaki Masaomi, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915. His name was mis-spelled in the record; it should be ‘Shimazaki’, as it was recorded in another court document in its original Japanese kanji as 島崎.

35. For further information, see Kondo (1995:216–217).

accused was Hajime Hayashi, who appeared in court on April 12, 1946. He testified that he belonged to the 26th Supply Depot, and his duty at the Chinese POW camp was making “[d]aily report concerning Chinese laborers” to Lieutenant Amada, who was the officer in charge of the Chinese POWs. When asked about the killing of Chinese, Hayashi stated, “I am a Formosan and was never allowed to be present at the scene of any killing. The reason I knew about the death of Chinese was that I held the nominal roll and checked the personnel daily”; and he added, “At the time, I had been working almost every day in the orderly room, and sometimes I will be at the scene of working as an [*sic*] Chinese interpreter.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, in an earlier interrogation report, Hayashi stated, “I was appointed to work in the Chinese labourers compound near Tobio in Jan[uary] 1943. I was there as an interpreter as I spoke a little Chinese. My duties were to allot labourers as requested by various units.”<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that Hayashi was considered the leading interpreter dealing with Chinese POWs, as he was the only one, among the seven accused Taiwanese, identified as “Chinese interpreter” by two fellow Taiwanese witnesses at the trial.<sup>38</sup>

Another accused Taiwanese, Eikyu Okabayashi, was called to the court on April 13, 1946. He stated that he arrived in Rabaul in November 1942 and was attached to the 26th Supply Depot. He testified that his duties at the “Chinese camp” were “to work along the Chinese labour [*sic*]”; and in a written statement he added that “From Jan[uary] to Sept[ember] [19]43 I was employed as civilian interpreter... and was out daily with Chinese labourers.”<sup>39</sup> Similar to Hayashi, Okabayashi also stated in an interrogation report, “In Jan[uary] to Sept[ember] 1943 I was employed as civilian interpreter... and was out daily with Chinese labourers.”<sup>40</sup>

The above testimonies and statements by two TWCs similarly and conspicuously pointed out that language proficiency – and the consequent interpreting duty – was the critical factor that led to their assignment to “control” Chinese POWs in Rabaul. Language proficiency was mentioned again in other documents related to this “Chinese POW killing” as a deciding factor in the accused TWCs’ job assignment in the war theater. In 1954, while serving time in Sugamo Prison in Japan, the aforementioned five TWCs who were commuted to life imprisonment after the “Chinese POW killing” trial filed application for clemency. In a

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36. Court testimony by Accused Hayashi, 12th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

37. Hayasi (*sic*, Hayashi) (Civilian), 1 Feb (February), 1946, in A471.80915.

38. Statement by Tanioka Kunihiro, a Formosan, 15th April, 1946; and statement by Toyoda Toshio, a Formosan civilian, 15th April, 1946, both in A471.80915.

39. Court testimony by Okabayashi Eikyu, 13th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

40. Okabayashi, 1 Feb (February), 1946, in A471.80915.

document compiled for the application, the National Offenders Prevention and Rehabilitation Commission, the Japanese authority in charge of war criminals' affairs, explained the role of Taiwanese at the Chinese POW camp in Rabaul. It was specifically stated that several Japanese "superior class privates" were in charge of "guarding and maintenance as well as employment" of the Chinese laborers. However, this document also stressed the following:

[A]s these superior class privates did not understand Chinese, 20 odd Formosans who were comparatively proficient in language and clerical work had been selected from members of the said Volunteer's Corp [*sic*] and temporarily assigned to the said Company as assistants and... employed for superintending and leading the said Chinese laborers in operations, and, at the same time, some of the capable Formosans were employed for clerical work.<sup>41</sup>

These documents show that their proficiency in "Chinese" led these Taiwanese laborers in Rabaul to take up an additional role as informal interpreter for the communication between the Japanese superiors and the Chinese POWs. The language issue in the interpreting process deserves further examination since "Chinese" is not a homogeneous language. While written Chinese more or less follows a unified system, spoken Chinese consists of hundreds of dialects. DeFrancis (1984) points out that there is no single spoken Chinese language; instead, Chinese language consists of a group of dialects or "regionalects," and many are mutually incomprehensible. So, in the Rabaul case, exactly what was the "Chinese" spoken between these Taiwanese interpreters and the Chinese POWs?

While the Australian trial records simply state that some of the Taiwanese were assigned as "Chinese interpreters" to deal with the Chinese laborers, the issue of the "Chinese" language they used is far more complicated. On the Taiwanese side, while most of them should be able to write some Chinese characters, the "Chinese" language they typically spoke was the Chinese dialects of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka. Then, what was the language spoken by the Chinese POWs? The answer can be found in a recent report published by the ROC's Ministry of Defense (Guofang bu 2009).<sup>42</sup> In 2008, the Ministry of Defense set up a special

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41. Application for Clemency, 27 February, 1954, Document 3, Summary of the Case in which Chinese laborers were killed at Rabaul, page 5, in Gaimu-sho, *Kowa Joyaku Hakko-go: Shamen Kankoku Kankei, Australia-no Bu* [Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive: After the Peace Treaty became effective, on the issue of pardon and appeal: Australia], D-1-3-0-3-9-2 (Ministry of Justice: Confidential Special No.1066, 29, May 1954), 377–379.

42. After the initial stage of this investigation, the Ministry of Defense sent another mission to Papua New Guinea in February 2009. The mission identified and restored several gravesites of Chinese soldiers, and conducted a memorial service at the site. The mission returned to Taiwan in March, carrying with it the tablet of "spirit of the ROC soldiers who died in Papua New

taskforce to investigate the history of ROC soldiers in Rabaul (ibid.:9); and it eventually identified that those Chinese laborers sent to Rabaul consisted of three groups (ibid.: 12–13, 29–42): (1) Surviving soldiers from the forces defending Si Hang Depot in Shanghai in 1937, captured by the Japanese in December 1941; (2) Surviving soldiers from the forces defending Quzhou Airport in Zhejiang province, captured in June 1942; and (3) Surviving members of the Loyal Righteous National Defense Army [Zhongyi jiuguo jun], a guerrilla force directed by Dai Li, then the head of intelligence activity of the Chinese government, and active in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. It was further reported that more than 1,500 Chinese POWs were sent to Rabaul as laborers: among them, more than 1,000 were from the Nanjing POW camp, and more than 500 were from the Shanghai POW camp (ibid.: 42–43). Based on the places of origin of these Chinese POWs, the language they spoke should be the dialects of Shanghai, Jiangsu and/or Zhejiang. It should be further noted that even within Jiangsu province, there are several distinct dialects. For example, people in Shanghai speak a language that is categorically different from the language spoken in the neighboring northern Jiangsu [*subei*] area. It should also be noted that Chinese POWs who had taken formal school training might be able to communicate in Mandarin, the “national language” promoted by the Chinese Nationalist government since the 1910s.

Based on the information presented above, it would be fair to argue that the dialects spoken by the Chinese laborers/POWs were incomprehensible to the Taiwanese speakers of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka dialects. Likewise, the Taiwanese assigned as “Chinese interpreters” actually spoke “Chinese” dialects that were incomprehensible to the Chinese POWs in Rabaul, unless they had taken special language training or obtained rare opportunities to learn to speak the dialects of Shanghai/Jiangsu/Zhejiang and/or Mandarin. There has been no evidence, however, to indicate that these Taiwanese were given special language training before or after their deployment in the fields. There is a possibility that Taiwanese and Chinese POWs in Rabaul communicated through “brushtalk”<sup>43</sup> because written Chinese is rather unified. However, the situations in which the said interpreting took place – i.e. in the battlefields and the work site – make it unlikely, if not impossible, to allow “brushtalk” as a means of communication.

So, how did the Taiwanese assigned as “Chinese interpreters” fulfill their interpreting duty? And exactly what “Chinese” did they speak to the Chinese laborers? The Australian and Japanese trial records do not contain any documentation to

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Guinea.” The Ministry of Defense subsequently conducted a formal state ceremony to receive the tablet and to enshrine the spirit at Martyr Shrine; see Guofang bu (2009: 137–149).

43. For further discussion of “brushtalk,” a practice in which Chinese intellectuals communicated with their Japanese counterparts through writing Chinese characters, see Howland (1996).

answer these questions. The only and most useful clue available today comes from the recollections by surviving Chinese POWs. For instance, one surviving Chinese officer stated:

We were not under the direct supervision of Japanese officers; instead, Taiwanese-native military employees served as guards. When [we] want to communicate with the Japanese, we had to first ask the Fujian-native members of our team, who could speak Minnan, to explain to the [Taiwanese] guards; and then they would relay [the message] to the Japanese; and vice versa for the returning communication [from the Japanese]. It showed how difficult it was to communicate with the Japanese.<sup>44</sup>

From the evidence presented above, it would be fair to argue that while language proficiency was a critical factor in the assignment of Taiwanese as “Chinese interpreters” to deal with the Chinese laborers/POWs in Rabaul, the language that really mattered in the interpreting duty was their native Minnan dialect. It became the key language that enabled communication between the Chinese side and the Japanese side. As the only speakers of Japanese and Minnan dialect, these Taiwanese were assigned as informal interpreters as well as guards supervising Chinese laborers. As pointed out in court testimonies, they were originally deployed as laborers. It was under the contingency in the war – the arrival of Chinese POWs in Rabaul – that they were reassigned to serve as interpreters because of their unique language capability. And more importantly, it is solely due to this reassignment that these Taiwanese became involved in the alleged war crimes.

It should be noted that language proficiency – or more precisely the denial of it – was also used in the defense of several TWCs in the Australian court. In the same trial, unlike Hayashi and Okabayashi who admitted to serving as interpreters, three other Taiwanese defendants (Kiohara, Furuya, and Yanagawa) all testified that they either had “forgotten Chinese”<sup>45</sup> or did “not understand the Chinese language.”<sup>46</sup> These testimonies clearly point to a strategy adopted by the defense to deny any involvement of the accused with Chinese POWs and thereby with the “Chinese POW killing.” Another Taiwanese in the same trial, Shimura, simply denied having any contact with Chinese laborers at the time of the killing in March 1943.<sup>47</sup>

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44. Interview record of Mr. Li Weixun; see Guofang bu (2009: 189).

45. Court testimony by Kiohara Takeo, 13th April, 1946; and court testimony by Furuya Eisuke, 13th April, 1946, both in A471.80915.

46. Court testimony by Yanagawa Uetane, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

47. Court testimony by Shimura Yuzo, 13th and 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

## 2.7 Taiwanese interpreters and Chinese POWs

The work situation of Hayashi, who was the leading interpreter dealing with Chinese POWs and became one of the two TWCs executed as a result of the trial, may further illustrate how language proficiency and interpreting duty brought or forced Taiwanese serving in the Japanese military into a difficult position during the war. In a signed document presented during the trial in April 1946, Suehiro Hagihara, who identified himself as Hayashi's superior in Rabaul since November 1942, recalled an earlier discussion he had had with Hayashi concerning the latter's work situation:

During wartime it seemed that the Chinese disliked Hayashi and after Armistice it was not infrequent that he was on the verge of being assaulted. Therefore it was towards the end of September 1945 that I asked him if there was any reason for this and his reply was as follows: During the time I was working at [*sic*] the Chinese labour party[,] I was very fluent in Chinese and in view of orders from superiors, I conveyed these orders to the Chinese and warned them from time to time. Then the stealing of military provisions by the Chinese at the scene of labour was frequent and on one occasion I said [,“]During your work you men are stealing tinned goods and eating them[.] This is just like a stray dog. If you carry on such acts, you will be punished[”]. And on another occasion the Chinese at their quarters were saying bad things about me, and then I said [,“]you were now saying bad things about me. If I reported this to the superior you will be punished[,] but if you will apologize to me now, I will overlook the matter[”]. Then they apologized. I think it is due to such incidents that I am disliked. I keenly felt that people who are in charge of persons are in a hatred [*sic*, hated] position.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, it was Hayashi's language proficiency in Chinese that led to his assignment as an interpreter. And subsequently, this work as an interpreter brought and forced Hayashi into a delicate and difficult situation between his Japanese superiors and the Chinese POWs. And worse, he was placed in “a hated position,” facing the Chinese laborers who were then abused, assaulted, and even killed in the hands of the Japanese military.

Hayashi's situation as an informal interpreter is not an isolated case. Tsuruichi Takebayashi, another TWC sentenced to death in the same trial but later commuted to life imprisonment, was also brought into a similar situation facing Chinese POWs. Takebayashi's superior, Yasushi Sato, made the following statement in a signed document presented during the trial in April 1946, concerning Takebayashi's character and work situation:

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48. Statement by Hagihara Suehiro, a civilian, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

Takebayashi had been gentle and had never quarreled with other Formosans or others but was so conceited that he interrupted sometimes my [*sic*] and other Japanese talking, therefore I think he was very conceited to Chinese, and he had been a Chinese interpreter for about one year[,] as a result he was much disliked by the Chinese. Around the middle of October last year after the Armistice, the accused was beaten severely by many Chinese while walking... and wounded severely and took [*sic*] to bed for about 10 days so I went and saw him. He had wounds in his face and eyes.<sup>49</sup>

Evidences analyzed above show that being an interpreter, even an informal one, put these Taiwanese into an unexpected, unusual, and unwilling position which led to accusation of their involvement in the alleged war crimes.

## 2.8 Sequence of events: *Ad hoc* interpreters and war crimes

In addition to the aforementioned case, the Australian court in Rabaul conducted another trial in connection with the “Chinese POW killing,” in which Susumu Yoneda, a Taiwanese, was charged with the “[m]urder of 4 Chinese PW at Talili about 29 April [19]43,” and brought to court in April 1946. Yoneda was convicted and sentenced to death by hanging on April 23; he was executed on June 11, 1946.<sup>50</sup> According to Japanese records, the job designation of Yoneda was “*gun-zoku* (civilian military personnel) of Rabaul Depot” (Kōsei-shō hikiage engokyoku (1955:36)).<sup>51</sup> However, in Australian court records, Yoneda was listed as “a civilian Formosan interpreter.”<sup>52</sup> These records together indicate that Yoneda was another case of Group 2; i.e. Taiwanese who were originally recruited and designated not as interpreters, but were assigned to perform *ad hoc* interpreting duty in the fields.

Yoneda’s role at the alleged crime scene was further clarified by one of the prosecutor witnesses, Lo Mei Ling, a “Lt. [lieutenant] in the Chinese National Army” of the ROC government. Lo, himself a former POW in Talili, testified that whenever he spoke to the supervising Japanese officer named Tajima, it was

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49. Statement by Sato Yasushi, a civilian, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

50. Warrant of Execution, in Proceedings of Military Tribunal, Tasaka, Mitsuo and Others, Department of the Army, A471.80978.

51. Yoneda’s Chinese name was given as 潘進添 Pan Jintian, and Japanese name as 米田進 Yoneda Susumu. In Australian trial documents, his name is misspelled as “Susume.” It should be “Susumu,” as spelled in his own petition in A471.80978.

52. Précis of Evidence, A471.80978.



“through interpreter Yoneda.”<sup>53</sup> Another witness, Yang Bing, a “2nd Lt. in the Chinese National Army,” also stated that “Yoneda was interpreting for Tajima.”<sup>54</sup> Yoneda, in his own testimony in court, also testified that he was assigned to interpret conversations between Tajima and Lo.<sup>55</sup> Based on these records, Yoneda’s role in the alleged crime could be confirmed as an interpreter between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs.

In this case, the victims were identified as four “sick PW” (prisoners of war), who were former members of the Chinese Army.<sup>56</sup> Looking at this case, a question arises again: why did a Taiwanese (interpreter) end up allegedly killing these sick Chinese POWs? Both Lo and Yang, in their respective testimony, elaborated on the situation in which Yoneda, a non-combatant Taiwanese, got involved in the killing. They both confirmed that Yoneda brought the weapon (a rifle) to the crime scene under the instruction of Tajima.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, from the perspective of Chinese POWs, i.e. the victims of the alleged crime, Yoneda was merely serving as an assistant to Tajima.

Yoneda’s own testimony in court further elaborated on his involvement in the killing. While the testimony may seem lengthy and rather fragmented, it is worth quoting it in detail to understand the sequence of events leading to the war crime:<sup>58</sup>

Question (by the Prosecutor). When did you first know that the Chinese were going to be killed.

Answer (by Yoneda). I first found out when I went to the place of execution, together with Tajima.

Q. Did you go to the sick men’s quarters before the sick men were taken to the mountain.<sup>59</sup>

A. Yes I did go.

Q. Was Tajima with you in the sick men’s quarters.

A. Yes.

...

Q. Did you go with the sick men from their quarters to the mountain.

A. Yes I followed behind them.

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53. Court testimony by Lo Mei Ling, A471.80978

54. Court testimony by Yang Bing, A471.80978.

55. Court testimony by Yoneda Susume [*sic*], A471.80978.

56. Record of Military Court, A471.80978.

57. Court testimony by Lo Mei Ling, and court testimony by Yang Bing, A471.80978.

58. Court testimony by Yoneda Susume [*sic*], A471.80978.

59. The “mountain” refers to where the shooting/execution took place.



- Q. Was Sgt [*sic*, Sgt. or Sergeant] Awano with you then.  
 A. Yes Sgt Awano was there, but he was ahead of us leading us.  
 Q. Did he join you at the sick quarters.  
 A. I met him at the entrance to the labour camp.  
 Q. Was that after you had started with the sick men from their quarters.  
 A. Yes.  
 Q. When did you first know that the Chinese were going to be taken to the mountain.  
 A. When Sgt Awano told us to follow behind.  
 Q. Before you left with the sick men did you at any time during that morning interpret any conversations between Tajima and Lt. Lo.  
 A. Yes I did interpret it.  
 Q. Where did the conversation take place.  
 A. At Lt. Lo's quarters.  
 ...  
 Q. Did you think it odd that you a civilian was ordered to shoot Chinese when there were Japanese close handy.  
 A. I did not have an opportunity [to] think it odd as I was not given a chance because it was at the pit right before the shooting.  
 Q. Why did you protest when given the order by Sgt. Awano.  
 A. I thought it was not my duty to kill the Chinese as I was only a Formosan Labourer.  
 Q. What happened when you refused to carry out the order.  
 A. When I objected to that Awano came very close to me and told me that I was to do exactly the same as Tajima did or otherwise he would kill me.  
 Q. When Awano said that to you did you think he would actually carry out the threat.  
 A. Yes I thought he would carry out the threat.

In addition, there is a statement signed by Yoneda in another court document:<sup>60</sup>

I was a Chinese interpreter attached to the Talili Branch of the 26 Field Supply Depot. I think the incident occurred about the 20th of April 1943. That day I interpreted and took Chinese to the place where they were to be shot. Being ordered by Sgt. AWANO, I shot two Chinese and First c\_\_\_\_<sup>61</sup> private TAJIMA shot the other two.

The above testimony by Yoneda better delineates the sequence of events that led to his involvement – as well as that of other convicted TWCs who had served as *ad hoc* interpreters such as Hayashi – in the killing of Chinese POWs. According to the records, the following would be a sequential summary of what happened:

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60. "Yoneda, Susumu states," A471.80978.

61. The word is illegible in the document, but should be "class."

1. Assignment of *ad hoc* interpreter

Due to the language barrier, communication was difficult if not entirely impossible between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs. Under the circumstances, interpreters were needed. In Rabaul, the only persons capable of this task were Taiwanese who could speak both Japanese and Chinese (dialects). Therefore, in addition to the original job such as laborers of the Taiwanese Special Labor Volunteer Corps, Taiwanese who were able to speak and communicate in multiple languages were given additional assignment as *ad hoc* “Chinese interpreters.”

2. Interpreting duty and more

Whenever any Japanese – whether it was an officer or soldier – needed to talk to or convey a message to Chinese POWs, a Taiwanese would be required to be present as interpreter to enable communication between the Japanese and the Chinese. Because of their language ability, Taiwanese would always be needed and present in any matters that dealt with Chinese POWs. For the sake of convenience, the duty of supervising Chinese POWs was also given to the Taiwanese.

3. Participation in the killing of Chinese

At the killing of Chinese POWs, Taiwanese were needed as interpreters. These Taiwanese were initially present simply to perform the duty as interpreters. They were first at the living quarters of Chinese POWs, conveying messages from the Japanese officers to the Chinese. Then, when the Japanese officers told those sick Chinese POWs to step out and walk to the location where they would eventually be killed, the Taiwanese interpreters were present all the time, again, to convey messages from the Japanese officers to the Chinese. As the Taiwanese were at the bottom of the Japanese military rank, they were subject to orders given by other Japanese soldiers and had no autonomy in terms of job assignment. In the case of Yoneda, he was initially told to be present to perform interpreting, but was given an additional duty by Tajima, who was a First Class Private, to carry weapons and follow Chinese POWs to the pit, where the killing would take place. Japanese officers gave order to the soldiers to kill the sick Chinese POWs at the pit. The Taiwanese present at the pit were also ordered by Japanese soldiers to take weapons and shoot the Chinese. The Taiwanese could only follow the order, as they did not have any power to refuse or act against Japanese officers or soldiers. Thus, the Taiwanese who served as *ad hoc* interpreters participated in the killing of Chinese POWs.

As illustrated above in the cases of Yoneda and Hayashi, among others, language proficiency led civilian Taiwanese to perform interpreting duty between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs. As a result, these *ad hoc* interpreters were brought or rather forced into a situation in which they became involved in

the alleged war crime. In other words, based on analysis of trials records from the Australian courts, informal interpreting duty was partially connected to the conviction and death sentence of several TWCs, such as Hayashi, Okabayashi, Takebayashi, and Yoneda in the two Chinese POW killing trials.

### 3. Conclusion

While the formal job assignment as interpreters or the occasional assignment of informal interpreting duty alone did not lead to the trials of these Taiwanese war-time interpreters as war criminals and none of the TWCs was convicted solely because of their interpreting, the assignment as interpreters did play a significant role in bringing or forcing a good number of civilian Taiwanese into their involvement in the alleged war crimes. And in the cases of Muneharu Yasuda, Hajime Hayashi, and Susumu Yoneda, their interpreting work partially but directly led them to a postwar situation in which they were convicted with war crimes and paid the ultimate price.

In discussing the relationship between interpreting and power (and its consequences), Delisle and Woodsworth (1995:274) point out that “[i]n the German army, interpreters held the rank of officers. This was not necessarily an advantage if the interpreter became a prisoner of war.” The cases of Taiwanese wartime interpreters as analyzed above show that during the war language proficiency and interpreting duty brought a number of Taiwanese to a status with which they were seemingly given higher “power” vis-à-vis the local civilian residents under the terror of the *Kempeitai*, or the Chinese POWs under their supervision. The Taiwanese – as Japan’s colonial subjects – were made to be interpreters under a rather peculiar colonial and wartime context. Taiwanese interpreters had unique language proficiency of their native Chinese dialects and the Japanese (i.e. the language of the colonial ruler and their acquired “national language”), which re-defined the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The history of Taiwanese wartime interpreters certainly adds a new dimension to the discussion of politics of language (*kokugo* or “national language”) and Japanese colonialism.<sup>62</sup>

Language proficiency, unfortunately, became a burden on these Taiwanese wartime interpreters after the war, as they were identified as war crime suspects, sent to the courtrooms, and eventually convicted and punished. As Takeda points out (in this volume: 241), wartime interpreters became “targets of condemnation, attacks and prosecutions as war crimes suspects as they can be viewed as a

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62. See further discussion in Lee (Maki Hirano Hubbard, trans.) (2010), or the Japanese original in I (1996).

proxy of the enemy, traitors and accessories to unlawful acts.” In fulfilling their interpreting duty, willingly or unwillingly, Taiwanese took the responsibilities of the Japanese military’s crime and suffered the consequences. In the battlefields, they served as messengers between two warring parties; but in the postwar war crime trials, their role as messengers led to punishment and even death for them.

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