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Guest Editorial: Prisoners of the Asia-Pacific War

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Guest Editorial*

It is my very great pleasure to present the following Special Issue Prisoners of the Asia-Pacific War. I was fortunate to be present in February 2023 when Daniel Milne brought together a diverse group of researchers for a workshop at Kyoto University, Japan with the goal of reconsidering the memory of captivity in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War. The fruits of those discussions are on display here.

Studies of captivity have been integrated into the military historical narrative of the Second World War and for many the enduring image of the war's Pacific theatre is that of maltreated Allied Prisoners of War forced to construct the Thai-Burma railway. One of the goals of this issue is to widen our perspective to other captive combatants and captive civilians and to decentre the narrative of the memory of war away from typical national narratives. It offers us new ways of looking at captivity and makes us realise that internment left a broad footprint on post-war memories.

Not only do the papers on display highlight the innovative approaches to the study of the memory of war by mixing global and local narratives to shed light on under-researched areas of the war, but their importance also helps us to understand the conflict as a whole. To further display the health of the field, the issue provides us with introductions to research tools such as the Japanese-language Prisoner of War and Civilian Internment Camp Encyclopedia which was painstakingly created by a group of amateur historians motivated by a desire to understand their local history. It also includes a selection of specially curated book reviews to point our readers towards the latest resources for studying the Second World War in the Pacific.

We are grateful to Daniel, Anoma, and Beatrice for the incredible amount of work they have carried out in creating the intellectual framework and identifying high-quality contributors to bring this Special Issue together into a single coherent and enlightening package.

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