

Chapter 2

A Historical Overview of the Battle for Saipan

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Prewar Japanese Interest in the Northern Mariana Islands

Between the seventh and sixteenth centuries, Japan experienced an internal conflict of its own in that it was caught between a propensity to peacefully strengthen ties with its eastern neighbors and an inherent compulsion to strike out and manifest long-standing maritime pursuits all in the collective name of expanding national interests. During the sixteenth century, however, more aggressive ingress within Asia was thought necessary in order to stem the tide of Russia's eastward advancements. Simultaneously, the call to sea was lent greater credence. These maritime advancements were unfortunately short lived because in the century to follow, Japan undertook a self-imposed isolationist world view, which kept it cut off from the rest of the global community for two hundred and fifty years. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when Japan again saw fit to return to the more inclusive global order that it followed through with its push for expansion into the greater South Pacific. This included charting a course toward Micronesia and effectively encompassing the Northern Mariana Islands.

Although new for Japan, appearing on the Central and South Pacific scene was, by the late nineteenth century, a mainstay for other formidable European countries. Spain was still in the Marianas, having colonized the archipelago during the latter half of the seventeenth century and now had the Caroline Islands as well.¹ Her cessation of the Marshall Islands in 1885 paved the way for Germany to make good on its burgeoning expansionist ideologies. Meanwhile, farther south, France and Great

¹With regard to the Marianas, bold initial (albeit unauthorized) inquiries in 1876 by Enomoto Takeaki, one of the foremost progenitors of Japan's *Nan'yō* (South Seas) doctrine, were put to Spain to see about her "willingness to sell the Mariana and Palau Islands" to Japan (Peattie 1988:5).

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Britain had laid claim to Tahiti and the Tuamotus and Fiji, respectively. To mitigate this and not be outpaced by the West, Japan undertook voyages of exploration in the hopes of finding yet unclaimed Pacific Islands. It did precisely this when in 1887 the Volcano Islands were discovered and subsequently claimed. For the next twenty years, Japan's prowess on the high seas went from exploration to lucrative commercial ventures in and around Micronesia further cementing its intent to remain a major political and economic contender if not leader. The opportunity to effectuate this latter objective came by way of Japan's auspicious victory in both the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905).²

Germany, under whose control the Northern Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands, and the Marshall Islands, along with the atolls of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro existed from 1899 to 1914, was persistently monitoring Japan's commercial activities. Despite increasing German restrictions, Japan maintained its hold on a greater percentage of economic activity throughout German Micronesia. Germany could not claim the same for its commercial pursuits. With growing tensions in Europe, mounting arguments on the German home front over the unmerited financial burdens of its overseas territories, and the eventual outbreak of WWI, Japan's long-awaited opportunity to enter the Pacific theater finally rued the day. Weighing anchor off the reef just outside the village of Garapan, Saipan, and without having as much as a single shot fired, she came ashore, raised her flag, and declared her presence. The day was 14 October 1914.³ It was not surprising that Japan's celerity in rooting its claims in Micronesia was not without its detractors, and the most prominent was the United States who also had a growing interest in the strategic importance of these Western Pacific Islands. This opposition was initially voiced in the discussions leading up to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 wherein US President Woodrow Wilson proposed the establishment of the League of Nations to temper future discord among the developed countries. The United States, however, never became a member of the league.⁴ In 1921, the league granted Japan a Class C mandate over the once German-held territories in the Pacific. In the meantime, Japan had already invested nearly seven years of administrative rule throughout its newly acquired insular possessions.

The decade and a half that followed witnessed tremendous economic activity for these mandated islands. In the Northern Mariana Islands, sugar indeed was king. Approximately thirty-eight percent of arable land on Saipan comprised the three sugarcane plantation sites, growing the main cash crop in the As Litú, Chacha, and Makpi (Marpi) areas. Tapioca came in second to none, while coffee and pineapples,

²Pursuant to its defeat in the Spanish-American War (1898), Spain sold the Mariana Islands to Germany for 25 million pesetas; DM \$16.7, US \$4.2 million (Craddock 1982:2). Also see von Bennigsen, R., translated by Dirk H. R. Spennemann (2003:xv).

³Throughout the month of October 1914, Japanese naval contingents sailed to the German outposts (Palau, Yap, Ponape/Pohnpei, Truk/Chuuk, Kusaie/Kosrae, and Jaluit) officiating preliminary administrative procedures and giving notice to the local populace that Japan now had control over the islands (Peattie 1988:62).

⁴Upon its establishment in 1919, the league comprised forty-two nations. The staunch opposition to the United States' membership in the league came from the US Senate (<https://history.state.gov>).

predominantly grown on the hillsides of Mt. Tapotchau, augmented the island's crop offerings. The refinery in Chalan Kanoa was producing sugar, sugarcane by-products such as molasses, and alcohol.⁵ To the southwest and across the three-mile channel of pelagic fishing grounds lay Tinian, which had almost eighty percent of the island functioning as a sugarcane plantation with its own refinery and its population of nonindigenous farmers and farming families.⁶ Farther southwest was Rota and although with approximately only nineteen percent of the island's arable land growing sugarcane, it also was the larger producer of phosphate among these three populated islands. In addition to the agricultural achievements, fishing and the production of *katsuobushi* (dried fish shavings) was equally prolific. Tourism also picked up pace. There were cruises between the three southern islands (Saipan, Tinian, and Rota; at times including Guam) as well as trips up to *Gani*.⁷

With heightened economic pursuits came the ever-increasing influx of immigrants. Not unlike Saipan and Tinian, Rota as well saw the arrival of Japanese and Okinawan farming families numbering in the thousands by the early to mid-1930s. So much so was this the case that the approximately 800 indigenous Chamorro and native Carolinians living on Rota were forcibly relocated from their long-standing familial lands in and around Songsong to the village of Tatachog. The unequivocal physical transformation of the islands did not go unnoticed by the local populace, and although they were also beneficiaries of revenue generated by sweeping economic windfall, the social disparities imposed upon them within the areas of education, employment, and most especially in the practice of civil liberties were leaving an indelible mark.

Increasing Western Suspicions, Japan's Withdrawal from the League of Nations, and the Onset of Hostilities

Western powers, although not yet fully convinced of the arguments launched by the United States with respect to the implications of Japan's rapid transformation of its insular possessions, were, however, cautiously receptive to considerations over closer scrutiny of her adherence to the stipulations of her Class C mandate. Additionally, given the technological advancements in warfare and weaponry of the day, it was not implausible that Japan could quickly fortify the islands (and more precisely, the Northern Mariana Islands), but that it would be difficult to find evidence of any such violation seemed the greater concern because since the inception

⁵ Hezel 1984. A brief economic history of Micronesia: Past achievements and future possibilities. Retrieved April 6, 2014, from <http://micsem.org/pubs/articles/economic/frames/ecohistfr.htm>

⁶ During these economic boom years, there were no indigenous Chamorro and/or Carolinians residing on Tinian. It was not until 1948 that native islanders of Chamorro and/or Carolinian descent returned to Tinian to resettle the island.

⁷ *Gani* is the ancient Chamorro term used to refer to the islands north of Saipan (Levesque 1993:175).

of her administrative control in 1914, she had effectively quelled and/or ousted Western economic interests with a consistent barrage of restrictions against access to her mandated Micronesian Islands. Of equal contention was the fact that between 1925 and 1938, Japan was already exporting millions of dollars in goods from the Northern Mariana Islands to the Japanese home islands and slowly but surely was undertaking improvements to port facilities and its airfields on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Pagan in the name of economic advancement.⁸

Japan's reaction to these hints of suspicion fueled the fire. During its 24 February 1933 assembly, after a speech by delegate Matsuoka Yosuke reiterating Japan's resolve over the issue involving Manchuria, the League of Nations voted to adopt the resolution demanding Japan's withdrawal of her military installations therein and to return Manchuria to China. Japan responded by walking out of the assembly vowing never to return.⁹ What essentially followed were tighter restrictions on access to the islands as well as movement within and between them. In 1935, Japan formally withdrew from the league and proceeded with what some have argued to have been efforts to fortify the islands.¹⁰ In 1938, Saipan and her sister islands were closed to all extraneous access. The principal officers of major companies and holdings as well as other professionals were advised to return to Japan. Interestingly enough, there is what appears to be a consequential absence of photographic documentation of the Northern Mariana Islands during this time as well.¹¹

It is not inconceivable that among the native populace, there were those that had some notion that something was afoot, although they had learned during the previous Spanish and German administrations, respectively, not to make any direct inquiries.¹² The sociopolitical environment within which the native Chamorro and Carolinians of Saipan found themselves during the Japanese prewar administration was not in any way equitable in nature.¹³ The administrators considered the natives *third-class citizens* with the Chamorro occupying a penultimate standing. Their first exposure to WWII hostilities came when preparations were underway for the Japanese invasion of the island of Guam. Before the arrival of European explorers, the ancient Chamorro of the Northern Mariana Islands and those of the island of Guam were one and the same people, one and the same culture. The geopolitical ramifications of the Spanish-American War of 1898 changed that affiliation. While not altogether dissimilar from the system of governance under Spain, the native Chamorro of

⁸ Peattie provides an in-depth discussion of US efforts to amass intelligence about Japan's activities within the mandated islands (Peattie 1988:237–247).

⁹ Brown (1933); Upon exiting the assembly, Matsuoka was reported to have said: "We are not coming back" (http://www.johndclare.net/league_of_nations6_news.htm, accessed 31 March 2014).

¹⁰ Russell points out that the construction of As Lito Airfield was begun in 1934 and that a seaplane base at Puntan Flores was completed in 1935 (Russell 1983:21).

¹¹ A compendium of photographic material depicting the conditions of the Northern Mariana Islands did not appear until after WWII.

¹² Those that preferred not to wait to be told what to do proceeded to move to the family farmsteads along the higher elevations of the island.

¹³ Nor was there equity during the Spanish or German administrations, respectively.

Guam found a growing affinity for its US administrators. Conversely, the native Chamorro and Carolinians of the Northern Mariana Islands, for the most part, had no such inclinations toward the German or subsequent Japanese rulers. When “battle” lines were drawn however, allegiance given relatively freely to the “state” compared with an absence of allegiance to anyone or anything other than to culture and family became the group’s dismissive and divisive element. These contentions placed those Chamorro conscripted by the Japanese military to aid in Guam’s invasion in opposition with their native Guamanian brethren.¹⁴ War came to Guam 08 December 1941, precisely within an hour of the Japanese air fleet having taken off across the international dateline en route to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.¹⁵

The Battle for Saipan

Hostilities on Saipan itself actually began with three days of strafing prior to the Marines landing on the island’s southwestern shoreline 15 June 1944. Stretching from the area immediately north of Agingan Point to just a little beyond present-day Quartermaster Road in the Chalan Laulau area, the landing beaches cover a linear distance of approximately 4.15 miles (6.68 km). Designated with code names Yellow, Blue, Green, and Red, the beaches were further delineated by sector numbers. Susupe Point, which was incorrectly referenced as “Puntan Afetña” on US military maps, functioned as the dividing line between the 4th and 2nd Marine Divisions.¹⁶

The 4th Marine Division covered the beaches south of Puntan Susupe. On a south-to-north orientation, these sectors were Yellow 3, 2, and 1 and Blue 2 and 1. The 4th was followed inland by the 27th Army Infantry Division, which comprised the reserve units. The 2nd Marine Division came up on the beaches to the north of Puntan Susupe, which included Green 2 and 1 and Red 3, 2, and 1. The fighting was its fiercest along Yellow Beach and some confusion in navigating the reef and currents pushed the 2nd Marine Division lines north of their intended objectives. The units had to make their way back to the designated sectors in order to push inland as planned. The gap that developed between the 4th and 2nd Marine Divisions over the Green 3 sector took three days to resolve. On the first day of the

¹⁴Whether or not this absence of allegiance to Japan was understood or appreciated by the native Guamanians, what was evident was that anything coming out of the NMI was touted to be Japanese and therefore was the enemy (Poyer 2001:39). The ramifications of what transpired during WWII influenced Guam to vote “NO” twice to the NMI’s request for reunification in the 1960s. The considerations and perspectives of what happened on Guam during the Japanese invasion remain an extremely contentious issue to this day.

¹⁵The air strike targeted for Guam was comprised of planes that took off from Saipan’s As Lito Airfield (Russell 1983:21).

¹⁶What consequently followed, and evidenced by oral accounts of the battle recounted by returning WWII veterans from 2003 and continuing and witnessed by this author, is the fact that what is today known as “Sugar Dock” ended up being the literal dividing line between the 4th and 2nd Marine Divisions.

assault, the US forces gained an area stretching 10,000 yards long, 1,000 yards deep at a cost of over 2,000 casualties.¹⁷ An assault force comprising 66,000 men was committed for Saipan and Tinian while 39,000 were required for Guam. All told, 105,000 men were needed to bring down Japan's defenses in the Marianas.¹⁸

The campaign to capture Saipan, Tinian, and Guam was collectively known as *Operation Forager*. On Saipan, the main objectives were to secure the beachheads, capture As Lito Airfield, hold Mt. Tapochau, and push the remaining Japanese military contingents north toward Marpi Point. After the 27th Army took control of As Lito Airfield on 18 June and having secured Saipan's southern point (Naftan) together with the 4th Marine Division units, the drive northward was to have been effectuated with the 2nd Marine Division sweeping along the western shoreline and coastal inland areas while the 27th Army painstakingly picked its way through Saipan's central ridgeline and the 4th Marine Division maintaining the sweep along the eastern inland coastal and shoreline perimeters. Simultaneously, on the 18th, out at sea, the Japanese fleet (commanded by Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa) sent to turn the tide against the US forces was intercepted by Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher and his Task Force 58. What ensued was the Battle of the Philippine Sea otherwise more popularly known as the *Great Marianas Turkey Shoot*.¹⁹

The initial strategies employed by US forces in the 1920s in preparing for a confrontation with Japan in an all-out Pacific War did not involve the Marianas in a predominant way. However, the advent of the B-29 Superfortress (long-range bomber) and a redirected focus on bombing raids as a means of wearing down Japanese military might brought the Marianas into prominence as the staging area for expansive airfields from which the bombing raids would run. Japan itself had similarly strategized and had intended for this purpose three airfields and one seaplane base on Saipan (and by which As Lito Airfield functioned as a forward maintenance and fighter base), four airfields on Tinian, two on Pagan, and one on Rota. She had also planned to install four airfields and one seaplane base on Guam after wresting it from US control.²⁰

The next objective, beyond As Lito Airfield, was Mt. Tapochau, the highest point on Saipan along the central ridgeline and from which a 360-degree view line of the island was readily accessible. However, fighting for the 27th Army Infantry within the hills and pockets of "Death Valley" along the southeastern base of Mt. Tapotchau proved ill-fated for their commanding officer, General Ralph Smith, who was

¹⁷Russell (1994:15).

¹⁸Russell (1983:22).

¹⁹According to Russell, Ozawa's antiquated planes and equally inexperienced pilots were no match for Mitscher's advanced aircraft and seasoned pilots, which stemmed the tide of Japan's onslaught upon the Pacific (Russell 1994:18).

²⁰In addition to As Lito Airfield on Saipan were the airstrips at Marpi Point and the stretch of Beach Road today running parallel to the beachhead from Susupe Point (southern end) to Kilili Beach (northern end). Both airstrips were still in arguably early stages of construction when the US Marines landed.

replaced by the Marine General Holland Smith.²¹ Known to the island natives as *Papagú*, this area contained caves and fissures within which the Japanese were deeply entrenched and from which they fought the 27th Army and 4th Marine Division units to the greatest advantage possible. Despite this upper hand, the area was secured after several days of fierce fighting. When the 27th Army and 8th Marine units ascended Mt. Tapotchau, Japanese military personnel were nowhere to be found. It was by that time 27 June 1944, thirteen days into the Battle for Saipan.

The battle itself presented new issues rife with categorical challenges. In addition to being a high island, it also was one straddled with a large civilian population. While the US forces certainly understood and appreciated the existence of a civilian populace, they were ill-prepared for the actual count. A good number of the WWII veterans who participated in the battle have recounted over the past several decades how they were bringing in civilians within the first few hours of landing on the beaches (especially within the Yellow Beach landing sectors). Given these circumstances, the Marines had no choice but to put together makeshift stockades within which these civilians could be housed and protected. These roughshod trappings later gave way to a more organized facility known as Camp Susupe, which officially operated as a civilian camp 4 July 1944. Several months later in October, a second camp (Camp Chalan Kanoa) was established to cater to the native Chamorro and Carolinians. The Japanese, Okinawan, and Korean civilians remained in Camp Susupe.

While the Civil Affairs units were attending to the civilian issues in Camps Susupe and Chalan Kanoa, the 2nd Marine Division engaged their Japanese counterparts in Garapan, which was the first encounter of the enemy within a more urbanized setting. Within two days of fighting, Garapan fell under US control. At this point in the battle, the 27th Army Infantry was already advancing steadily along the central ridgeline and continued the momentum northward. By the evening of 6 July, they had pushed the front lines to the north and east of Tanapag Village. The final drive toward Marpi Point was now in the offing.

Lt. General Yoshitsugu Saito, overall commander of Japan's Imperial Army on Saipan, had no misgivings about the tenacity and progress of the advancing US forces. The Battle for Saipan had now become a battle of attrition for Japan. In keeping with the shogun code of Bushido and the philosophies of State Shinto, a counter-attack was the only way to save face and for which Saito sent a request to mainland Japan for concurrence.²² Upon the request's approval, Saito readied his remnant contingents for the *Gyokusai* despite his ill and weakened state.²³ He gave the orders

²¹ In the estimation of the Marines, the 27th Army Infantry Division was not achieving decisive results pursuant to the strategized assault plans and therefore relieved Major General Ralph Smith of his command (Crowl 1995:191–201).

²² The Bushido code was one practiced especially by preceding generations of shogun wherein tenacity in battle and an honorable death by one's own hand instead of being captured by the enemy was tantamount to the glorification of country and emperor. When sidled with the ideologies of State Shinto, this glorification transcended toward an enlightened sense of nationalism and militarism.

²³ *Gyokusai* translates to "the crushing of the jewel" and for which Saito encouraged the approximately 3,000 remnant troops to take seven American lives for each Japanese life lost.

for the counterattack and to officers and enlisted alike; he stressed adherence to the Japanese battle ethics known as *Senjinkun* wherein honor is achieved in taking one's own life as opposed to suffering the disgrace of surrender and/or capture at the hands of the enemy.²⁴ Literally living by example, Saito committed himself to the *Senjinkun* once the initial wave of the *Gyokusai* descended the slopes abutting Makunsha to the west and the unsuspecting 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 105th Infantry.²⁵

Previously, on 6 July, Lieutenant General Holland Smith ordered the 27th Army Infantry Division to join the 4th Marine Division in pushing the front line in a north-easterly direction to the island's tip and along with it, all remaining Japanese forces. It became apparent shortly after the 27th Army was engaged that it would not be able to stay abreast of the line alongside the 4th Marine Division. Smith changed tactics midmorning and had the 27th redirect to a northerly push up the western coastal stretch. They were to secure the area from just north of Tanapag Village to the coastal perimeter north of Makunsha; furthermore, the 27th Division battalions (165th and 105th Infantry) were to advance inland and secure Harakiri Gulch and Paradise Valley and from which they were to push the remnant Japanese forces north along the coast and northwest from the central ridgeline. The 4th Marine Division was responsible for the area due north and northeast of the 27th Army Infantry Division's designated front lines.²⁶ As the day progressed and the orders carried out, the 27th Army Infantry Division units and especially the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 105th Infantry were positioned within reach of their northern perimeter. All the while, the 25th, 24th, and 23rd Marines were mopping up the eastern coastline and rounding about from their northeast line to meet the 27th Division units in the strategized effort to "pinch" off the remaining Japanese forces. The eastern coastal mop-up effort was beleaguered with caves and rock shelters from which civilians and Japanese military stragglers were continually being extracted. On the evening of 6 July, as the 25th Marines were about to dig in for the night at the base of Mt. Petosukara, a group of approximately seven hundred to eight hundred civilians intercepted the perimeters of the 25th Marines and surrendered.²⁷ Little did the mop-up units know what lay in store at dawn's light on the opposite side of the central ridgeline.

Comprised of approximately 3,000 souls, the three-pronged all-out charge began at about four o'clock the morning of 7 July. Coming out just south of Makunsha and over the lower slopes fronting the central ridgeline to the east, the main thrust of the *Gyokusai* pushed south along the area between the beach and the railroad tracks.²⁸

²⁴ Crowl (1995:257).

²⁵ Saito fell upon his own sword and then his adjutant shot him in the head (Crowl 1995:257). The participants of the *Gyokusai* were themselves armed with whatever they had remaining, which went from rusted guns to wooden poles to which knives or bayonets were fastened (Crowl 1995:258).

²⁶ Crowl (1995:247).

²⁷ Crowl (1995:248); Mt. Petosukara is the area of *Laderan i Tanki* on the current USGS topographical map of Saipan.

²⁸ Crowl discusses the existence of several reports wherein the actual count of the *Gyokusai* is generally accepted to be around 3,000. The lowest number of participants, offered by accounts of the charge, is 1,500 while others estimate it to have been 2,500–3,000 (Crowl 1995:258).

Across the nearly flat expanse of coastal terrain abutting the central ridgeline to the southeast went the other wave of the attack while the central line went right through the gap that lay between the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 105th Infantry (who held the front lines nearer to the beach) and the 105th's 3rd Battalion (who held the line farther inland along the base of the central ridgeline).²⁹ Within about an hour, the Japanese forces went hand to hand with the 1st and 2nd Battalions overtaking them in less than thirty minutes.³⁰ So strong was this raging torrent that the US front lines were not just effectively pushed back out to sea, but all the way back to Tanapag Village where all seemed lost until the first signs of aid came around after over eight hours of close-range fighting with the Japanese. US forces began to regain lost ground thereafter, and by the evening of 7 July, all that was left to do was to extract surviving Japanese military stragglers and civilians from the myriad of caves and rock shelters that pockmarked the area. To the army's chagrin, Lt. General Holland Smith relieved the 27th Army Division of mop-up duty and assigned it to the 2nd Marine Division instead.³¹ Over the course of the next two days, the 2nd Marine Division pushed north toward Marpi Point mopping up through the western shoreline and coastal inland areas while the 4th Marine Division (with its 165th Infantry reserve units) swept through the eastern coastal peripheries and terraces. At 4:15 p.m., 9 July 1944, Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner declared Saipan "secured."³²

Shortly after the announcement, the suicide jumps began. Japanese civilians that had taken heed of their military's propaganda about the American devils raping and devouring Japanese women and children, respectively, chose death over surrender. The jumps over the cliffs of Marpi Point were not specifically relegated to what today are known as Suicide Cliff and Banzai Cliff.³³ Japanese civilians jumped off the Marpi Point cliffs wherever they could do so. Those that jumped off the Suicide Cliff and surrounding areas fell upon the jagged coral limestone outcrop below. Those that leapt from the Banzai Cliff line met their demise in one of two ways: upon the rocks below that were exposed when the ocean swells receded or succumbing to the force of the churning currents particular to this area of the island's northern waters. Those that were nowhere near the cliff edge carried out the will of propaganda by huddling around a person or family member holding a grenade with the pin pulled. Those Japanese civilians and/or military that apparently had conflicts of conscience and were inclined to surrender were gunned down by Japanese military. The US troops were at a loss to stem this tide of submission to death.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ O'Brien, F. A. (2003) *Battling for Saipan: The True Story of an American Hero—Lt. Col. William J. O'Brien*, The Ballantine Publishing Group.

³¹ Lt. General Holland "Howling Mad" Smith's disdain for the army surfaced at every opportunity during the Battle for Saipan. However, scholarly research by Harry A. Gailey published in 1986 proved that such displays of contempt were "unwarranted and unconscionable" (O'Brien 2003:xiii).

³² The US flag was raised at Marpi Point earlier during the day of 9 July 1944. It was at 4:15 p.m., however, that the flag was officially raised at HQ in Chalan Kanoa and the announcement made by Admiral Turner (Russell 1994:25).

³³ The names of these two sites came about after WWII and specifically with historical reference to the occurrence of the suicide jumps 9 through 10 July 1944.

Desperate pleas from US military interpreters and from captured civilians (inclusive of children) largely went unheeded. Captains of US military sea vessels operating on the waters off Marpi Point pulling aboard survivors of the jumps had to turn off their engines because the propellers were cutting into the bodies of the dead adrift not in a tropical azure sea but one that ran blood-red. It is still not known exactly how many Japanese civilians perished (of their own accord) on these two fateful days.³⁴ It is known that the last group of native, non-Japanese civilians were extracted from Marpi Point 8 July 1944 and transported to Camp Susupe.³⁵ The mop-up efforts continued through the month of July and well into 6 August 1944. These efforts were conducted solely by the 27th Army Infantry Division. The 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions were relieved of mop-up duty and pulled back to prepare for the landing on nearby Tinian Island, the battle for which began 24 July and lasted through to 2 August 1944.

Although the Battle for Saipan and WWII's Pacific theater came to a close for the two warring factions, the conflict was far from concluded for the surviving native Chamorro and Carolinian islanders back in Camp Susupe. The chapter on colonialism, which was first written in 1668 under Spanish rule, was about to be given a fourth turn, this time with the United States at the helm as trustee for what was to become the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The war and the battle come to life with each vivid recounting of those that fought it and those that survived it. The extant remnant features that comprise the battle sites out in Saipan's lagoon and surrounding waters, as well as those that riddle the island itself, are reminders of this devastating segment of native island history. Regrettably, the ravages of the battle rage on in the memories of the families of the 933 native men, women, and children that died in a conflict not of their making.³⁶ For these departed, there would never be resolution. They neither died fighting for principles of freedom nor defense of country. They simply died and ostensibly are categorized as *collateral damage*, but yet even this descriptor was never theirs for the choosing.

³⁴ At the onset of the battle, the civilian count was approximately 40,000, inclusively, and of this number, a little over 4,000 comprised the native population of Chamorros and Carolinians (Russell 1994:32).

³⁵ This group included the surviving sisters of the order of the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz, Fr. Tardio Vasquez, S.J., Brother Gregorio Oroquieta, then novice Remedios Castro (native Chamorro), and several other native, non-Japanese civilians (Salaberria 1994:22–25, 37). Because of their deeply rooted Roman Catholic beliefs, it is doubtful that any native Chamorro and/or Carolinian civilians participated in the suicide jumps.

³⁶ Cabrera (2005:17) It behooves us all to consider the native island survivors of the battle that died or were incapacitated in subsequent years in what appear to be war-related trauma not unlike what we are seeing now with the returning veterans of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere in which the US military has been/is a participant.

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