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HEADQUARTERS  
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY  
(PACIFIC)  
APO #234  
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

R E S T R I C T E D

INTERROGATION NO. 471

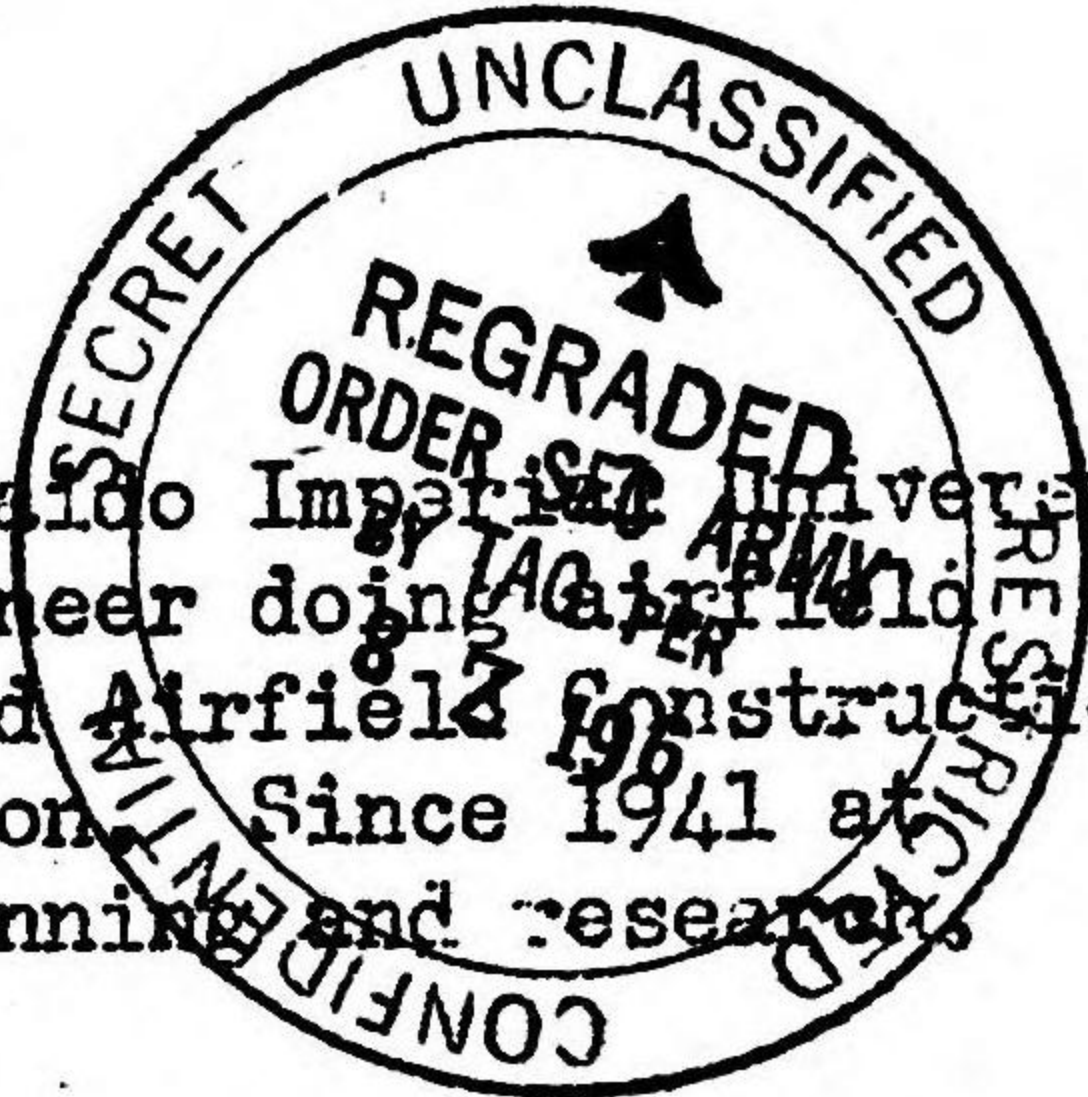
PLACE Tokyo  
DATE 28 Nov 1945

Division of Origin: Military Analysis.

Subject: Japanese Airfields.

Person Interrogated and Background:

Major SAITO, Yoshishi, graduated from Hokkaido Imperial University 1934; employed by the Army as a civil engineer doing airfield construction work; 1937 - 1940 with the 2nd Airfield Construction Unit; 1940 - 41 with the 3rd Flying Division. Since 1941 at Koku Hombu doing airfield construction planning and research. Entered Army in 1942.



Where Interviewed: Meiji Building.

Interrogator: Lt Palfrey

Interpreter: Lt Sneider

Allied Officers Present: Captain Haskins  
Captain Logan

**SUMMARY:** Problems and processes of airfield construction in China and Japan; the surfaces used, and the difficulties encountered due to the shortage of equipment and supplies.

Q. When you were in China, who determined what airfields were to be built, and what material they were to be made of?

A. The Intendance Section of Koku Heidan (Air Command).

Q. What type of surface did the airfields have?

A. Concrete, asphalt, macadam, clay and lime, gravel, grass.

Q. Which type surface do you consider most satisfactory?

A. Asphalt. However, there were only three fields in China with asphalt surface.

Q. How widely was concrete used in China?

A. Not much, although the key operational fields were paved with concrete. The weather in the area, local supplies of cement, and the shipments possible from Japan were the determining factors.

Q. What men were used in airfield construction?

A. There were 120 men in the construction unit of whom 20 were civilian specialists, and the rest were ordinary soldiers. The bulk of the manual labor was done by Chinese labor.

Q. What equipment did you have?

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- A. 3 rollers, 1 crusher and 1 concrete mixer with a capacity of about 30 cubic metres a day.
- Q. What was the average time it took to build an airfield?
- A. For a large airfield (1200 metres) about 6 months; for a small one about 2 months.
- Q. How thick was the surface?
- A. If the soil was soft, we put in a base of about 20 centimetres of crushed rock; if the soil was hard, as it usually was in China, we put in a base of about 5 centimetres. Then came the concrete surface of 8-10 centimetres in thickness. We would have preferred to have 15 centimetres of concrete, but the supply was limited.
- Q. Was the concrete laid in sections in China?
- A. Only in about 20 percent of the fields. Half of those had asphalt joints, and half wood joints. However, the wood joints were not very practical since they could not withstand the pressure of the concrete.
- Q. Do these figures apply also to Japan?
- A. No; in Japan, 60 percent of the concrete fields were laid in sections, 4/5 with asphalt and 1/5 with wood joints. However, during the last two years sections were not used very much because of the shortage of asphalt.
- Q. Was the concrete reinforced with steel?
- A. Almost never.
- Q. Didn't the single strip concrete crack in winter?
- A. Yes, it would develop cracks in Northern Japan where temperature changes were extreme. In Hokkaido most of the fields were paved with concrete sections or with asphalt to avoid this cracking. During the last year we finished 4 well-surfaced fields in Hokkaido (Sapporo, Obihiro, Kanebetsu, and Yakumo) with 15 centimetres of sand (which didn't shift around in weather extremes) as a base.
- Q. What was the thickness of the Macadam base?
- A. The macadam and crushed stone combination varied from 5 to 15 centimetres.
- Q. Which required more repair, the Macadam or the concrete?
- A. The Macadam required almost daily attention, although the repairs were more easily made.
- Q. Who performed the repairs in general?
- A. The construction units did the large repairs, and the airfield battalions did the small scale, non-technical work.
- Q. What equipment did the airfield battalions have, and what work could they do?

- A. All they had were one or two rollers. The only work they could do was to fill in holes in the concrete or Macadam surface with dirt and clay.
- Q. In your work at Air Headquarters, did you decide airfield locations?
- A. Air Headquarters directed that an airfield be built in a general area. We went to the area, inspected it, and made our recommendations, which were usually accepted.
- Q. Did Air Headquarters direct the construction of airfields overseas?
- A. It operated through the field commands, who planned the construction in their areas.
- Q. Did they ever send out specialists and equipment overseas on a large project?
- A. Occasionally; but in my opinion the best equipment was overseas. We used civilian contractors in Japan.
- Q. What percentage of the Army airfields in Japan were paved?
- A. I would estimate that about 55 percent of the Army airfields in Japan were grass and 45 percent paved, of which 3/4 were concrete and 1/4 asphalt. There was almost no Macadam in Japan. This proportion does not include the 20 or 30 small secret grass landing strips which were built in the Spring of 1945.
- Q. Do you know if the Navy had about the same proportion?
- A. The Navy had more paved airfields. The allotments of asphalt and concrete were evenly divided between the Army and Navy, and since the Army had so many other uses for these materials they had less to use on airfields.
- Q. Was there ever a concerted effort to increase the number of paved fields?
- A. Yes, until the secret airfield program of 1945.
- Q. When was the greatest period of airfield construction since 1941?
- A. 1943 and 1944. There was a serious shortage of concrete in 1945.
- Q. Did you do any major work on fields that had been heavily bombed?
- A. No repair work. My principal work was in extending the score of airfields, planning dispersal fields, and such work.