

Ex 1672

STATEMENT BY 1 LT. WATANABE Genjo.

Made in the presence of Lt. J.T. Oram, 30 November 1945.

I, Lt. WATANABE, Genjo, of SUGA BUTAI and TAKAKUA TAI landed at Kuching about 8 September 1942 and stayed there until May 1944. I then went to Sandakan arriving on 2 June 1944. I was adj. to Col. SUGA and later performed Adj. duties at the PW camp. Documents for movement from one camp to another passed through my hands.

On arriving at Sandakan I carried out the same duties as at Kuching under Capt. HOSHIJIMA. HOSHIJIMA was Comdr. until May when TAKAKUA took over. When I arrived NAGAI was there but he left 10 days later with the PW (100) for Labuan. I heard that later some of these PW went to BRUNEI under S/M SUGINO.

On May 29 1945 I moved to Kanau with PW on orders from Army HQ. We were informed that an Australian landing at Sandakan was imminent and other reasons for movement being the severity of air-raids at Sandakan. Capt. TAKAKUA was i/c and I was 2 i/c for the movement. Lt. SUZUKI from OKAYAMA BUTAI was also present and in addition were S/Maj. TSUJI, S/Maj. ICHIKAWA (QM), S/Maj. FUJITA (MED.), OZAWA (Civ. Interp.), the last named for 4 days only.

I remember S/Maj. STICPEWICH. There were 536 PW in the party on leaving camp. There were 91 English and 439 Australian PW. At 2100 hrs. on 1st day of March 4 PW returned to Sandakan by truck from 11 mile. WO STICPEWICH assumed charge of No. 2 group. There were then 6 short. Total 530.

On leaving Sandakan I had no nominal roll of PW for movement. At the end of the asphalt road at the end of the first day I called for nominal rolls of all PW then present. These were supplied by squad leaders. The first check from nominal rolls revealed discrepancy in numbers of about 6.

I gave orders for FUKUSHIMA and YSUJI (S/Maj.) to come along at the rear to make out list of dead and put such PW in the jungle. These men were assisted by other guards who were changed round from time to time. The last 2 soldiers to join the force at Sandakan were SUZUKI, Mitsuo, and KOBAYASHI, Tetsuo.

3 parties of MG came to Tambinan in charge of YANO Shoji and another. They were also OC of 3 party and I do not know the names of the OC of the other one party. I did not know who they are now.

Throughout the march from Sandakan men dropped out along the track and others could not move in the mornings and were left at the previous night's camp.

I remember the total destruction of Sandakan camp on 29 May 1945. The PW were allowed to take some documents or medical supplies from the camp. They were burnt by us. A PW was only allowed to take what he could actually carry, the rest was left behind and destroyed. This was all done on TAKAKUA's orders and I was present while the destruction was carried out. I do not think that the destruction of the medical supplies was humane or lawful.

About 183 English and Australian PW arrived at Ranau out of the 536 that left Sandakan: of these 142 were Australians, and also 1 Australian who died on the last day was carried in dead. Of the 353 unaccounted for, 54 escaped and about 90 were ill and were put out of their misery by being shot. They asked for death rather than be left behind. I do not know exactly nor did reports show accurately how death occurred. FUKUSHIMA and TSUJI dragged bodies into the jungle. At TAKAKUA's orders soldiers were told to dispose of sick PW and to see that none were left behind. I was i/c of the disposal of sick PW but was not present at the killings.

I moved with the rear group with the exception of FUKUSHIMA's party. Each morning all those PW who were unable to travel were placed in groups for FUKUSHIMA and TSUJI. The disposal of these PW was done behind me and I never knew who killed them.

I arrived at Ranau on the 25 June, 1945, and camped at the foot of the mountain 2 miles from Ranau. Next day everyone moved to Tambunan working camp at the 110 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (I clearly understand the sketch you have shown me). When I reached this camp there were already 9 PW under cmd. of 2nd. Lt. SUZUKI, this made a total of 192 PW in the camp under the cmd. of TAKAKUA.

The figure of 54 escapees was arrived at as the number unaccounted for on my lists. This was the only way I could account for them. I did not make out any death certificates and I cannot remember any being made out. When S/M STICPEWICH escaped the orders were to recapture him and find out the plans made by others to escape. There was no order to shoot him.

The investigation into JOHN HORE's escape was conducted by MORITAKE and HOSHIJIMA. HORE was killed and his body placed on the PW camp sign. HOSHIJIMA and I viewed the body there. I think HORE was shot in the chest by HINATA Genzo.

Prior to that escape PWs were caught going under the wire at the end of the camp to get food through a drain pipe. These men were taken back to HQs and placed in the guard house and were later put in the cage, as we viewed this as a serious offence. The KEMPEI TAI were not concerned with this. I saw

the men in the cage but had nothing to do with their treatment I know that one who was very sick, died in the cage. HOSHIJIMA was in charge and gave orders to MORITAKE as to the treatment of these PWs.

Three days after S/M STICPEWICH escaped at RANAU sick PWs were taken on stretchers up the hill to the cemetery. This was the 1st. August, 1945. Since I arrived at LABUAN I have made further enquiries and as far as I can determine the date the PWs were taken up to the cemetery and killed was the 1st. August, 1945. There were 17 of these sick men. I was in charge and Sgt. OKADA and approximately ten Formosan guards were also present at the killing. All the Formosan guards that were actually posted to the camp were in the camp area on that day. I may be able to recognise some of these guards if I saw them.

After these 17 were killed there were about 16 left in the camp and these were also shot on 1st. August, 1945. 11 of these were taken about 100 metres along the road towards TAMBUNAN and shot. S/M TSUJI with a fresh lot of about 15 or 16 Formosan guards shot the second batch. These two killings were at the same time 1000 hours on 1st. August, 1945. I do not know the names of the PWs killed. PICONE, COOK, CHOPPING, OATSHOT, DANIELS (English Doctor), MASKEY, and EVANS may have been among them. I only knew a few at SANDAKAN and only knew a few of the section leaders on the march.

Civilian FUJITA (interpreter) was present in camp but had nothing to do with the killings. Sgt. BEPPU took five PW officers about 100 metres towards RANAU he had ten Formosan guards with him. Also at 1000 hours on 1st. August, 1945, at the 1 1/2 mile at junction of two roads and behind rice store Sgt. BEPPU's party shot the five PW officers.

Sgt. IWABE was out searching for STICPEWICH and had nothing to do with the killings, S/M MORIZUMI had not yet arrived from SANDAKAN. I did not know that it was a general order from Army HQs to kill PWs. I do not know what MORITAKE's orders were. They were given direct from TAKAKUA. My orders came from my commander TAKAKUA.

FUJITA (medical Sergeant) had been wounded and was in bed in the camp area at the time of the killings. I do not know what the reason was for the killings, but I think it possible that the commanders feared that the PWs would escape.

Sgt. BEPPU's party killed	5 PWs
" OKADA's party killed	17 PWs
" TSUJI's party killed	<u>11 PWs</u>
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The order for the killing was secret. I have carefully checked the date and am sure that the killings took place on 1st. August, 1945. Information other than this must be a mistake

I first knew that the war was over on the 2nd. September, 1945. Documents from HQs gave this information. I heard some surrender bills were dropped from aircraft about 20th August, 1945, but did not believe them and thought that they were just propaganda.

On the 28th July, 1945, I remember Captain Cook bringing documents to me from deceased PWs for despatch to allied command. These were all burnt with my personal gear at RANAU. After the 1st. August, 1945, the camp moved first to TAMEUNAN arriving there 26th August, 1945, and later moved to SAPONG.

I, L/Lt. WATANABE Genzo, do solemnly affirm the above statement to be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

(Sgd) WATANABE Genzo

Affirmed before me at LABUAN on 8-12-45.

(Sgd) J. T. ORAM, Lt.

Certified true copy.

(sgd) T. MORRANE
Lt. Col.