

# One Jap

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This psychological study of a Jap pilot may help you to understand the stupid cruelties of "The March of Death"



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THIS is the success story of a Jap named Chunosuke Yamoka who, at the age of twenty-four, has contrived to die a hero's death, win a posthumous decoration from his emperor—and remain very comfortably alive.

His life-after-death began one February morning over an American airfield in China while Sergeant Major Yamoka was radio operator on a twin-engined bomber—one of three which had set out from Canton to do or die for old Nippon. He remembers hearing the bombardier call that they were over the initial point, and then there was a lot of vibration, the sound of bullets chewing into the tail, a moment of salty terror—full stop. A few days later his family was informed of his glorious death and was paid some compensation.

The only individual among the crews of the three bombers who lived, Yamoka suffered a slight concussion and remained unconscious in a Chinese-American hospital for two days. When he first awakened—late at night—the sole attendant in the ward was a Chinese girl nurse.

"I am dead," he said in Japanese.

"You're a prisoner," she told him and reached to feel his brow.

He grabbed her arm, pulled her across the bed, and jumped to his feet. The nurse screamed; Yamoka broke a teacup against the wall and tried to slash his wrist with one of the jagged pieces. Then he became sick to his stomach and passed out again.

Thereafter, intelligence officers took over the case. Experts on Japan, they anticipated more attempts at self-destruction; forestalled them by posting burly guards at his bedside. These had been instructed to handle the prisoner gently because many Japs try to die by making a

break and getting the guards to kill them.

While they watched for symptoms of hara-kiri, the warders had another important function—to keep anyone from speaking to him. Japs are frequently garrulous people and one of the best ways of predisposing them to talk is to starve them of conversation.

Otherwise the young airman was treated kindly: given the best care and food the little field hospital had to offer. This is part of the routine, too, because many Japs believe they will be tortured—a conviction which has as much to do with their suicide attempts as does a sense of shame at being captured. As their fear goes away so does their truculent manner and after a week or so of no talk but much solicitude they usually are reduced to rather pathetic little creatures who sigh a lot.

Yamoka was shot down on his first mission from Canton. Just before that he had been stationed with his squadron in New Guinea—and hated the place. The climate made him lazy while the food gave him diarrhea; he had entirely too much time to lie on his bunk and dream of Japan, spring, a girl. In a letter written to his family at this period appears the sentence, "Constant thinking makes me afraid." There he expresses something which has haunted him since childhood—thought always shook up his nice stable world. "Was the emperor completely infallible or just slightly so? Why did the Greater East Asia War have to be fought right now—with his life?" He would pray for strength—and less time to think.

He never talked about his doubts to anyone, but the head of his "progressive" school once gave him a lecture about such matters. He was an old man who had taught archaic Japanese at a university in Tokyo and his school, although far

from progressive by our standards, represented modernity to the Japs because it stressed the new fads—courses in ancient dances and folk lore, the so-called "pure" Nipponese language instead of the city speech which contained foreign words like "baseball" and "movies."

Just before Yamoka was to graduate, the headmaster took him for a long walk in the lovely woods of that part of Northern Japan. "You will soon be in the army," the old man said, "and will be fighting our country's enemies in China; perhaps elsewhere. I have never been a soldier but one bit of guidance I can give you: Do not doubt that the emperor is truly the son of heaven and inspired by God. He cannot err."

The eighteen-year-old boy, terrified lest the teacher had guessed his soul struggles, took to denying hotly that he had ever had a treasonable thought. "In this year of 1937," he said, "one is too well educated to doubt."

"Nevertheless," said the professor, "every morning and every evening say softly to yourself, 'The emperor is divine. In doing his will I am doing right.'"

## Fighting the Battle of Fear

From time to time Chunosuke has taken that advice. In New Guinea, for instance, where his doubts came often, he answered them with that catechism, and, in 1940, when he flew on his first combat mission over Foochow, China, he was afraid and said it many times before he returned safely to base. "It brought love into my heart," he says, "and made thinking go away."

After school Yamoka was not immediately conscripted. Although in that year men were being called up very fast, for some reason he had a full seven months of civilian life. It had been decided in family council that, inasmuch as he was the last born and would inherit no part of the land, he had best take a job. So every morning he walked five miles to a factory which manufactured paper from rice straw and there worked ten hours as a copyist in the accounting office. He was paid two yen a day—in buying power the equivalent of one American dollar.

Thanks to this wage he had money of his own for literally the first time in his life—got drunk one night and caught a spy. Like most country people, he had little real knowledge of the political currents which were turning Japan into a war machine, but he read enough posters to get thoroughly spy conscious.

On his way to the local brothel with two other boys from the paper mill, he saw a lone American trudging from the railroad station down the main street of

town "muttering to himself," as Yamoka tells it, and carrying a suitcase. As a complete absence of taxis was the regular state of affairs there, the young Japs couldn't imagine why the stranger showed such interest in every vehicle that passed.

The boys followed and, when they saw the foreigner hide his suitcase under a tree, jumped him. He struggled frantically and Yamoka held his arms while the other two helped half-drag, half-carry the "agent" to the local police station.

Yamoka heard no more about it—the police would tell him nothing—until shortly after Pearl Harbor. At that time, having finished a year of basic training and a special radio course, he was on his first tour of foreign service in Manchukuo. He received a letter from the political police in Tokyo asking him to sign a statement that he remembered seeing an American of certain description hide dynamite in a "critical place."

Yamoka proudly signed the document. Manchukuo, interior China, and then to New Guinea, his bombardment squadron replacing a *chutai* which had fought through the first Solomons campaign. There they were billeted at Port Moresby in the midst of a considerable Melanesian population—the first colored people Chunosuke had ever seen. "The human race seems odd," he wrote to his father, "when you realize that these dark-skinned creatures are also human beings—just like us."

While there he was awarded the Order of the Golden Kite, a decoration given after completion of twenty-five combat missions. It meant a small addition to his pay—bringing his monthly earnings to about sixty dollars—but the great thing was that it came in the name of the emperor. "It seems I am dreaming when I hold the emperor's gift in my hand," he told his commanding officer.

Today Yamoka lives quite comfortably in a prisoner-of-war camp in the Far East. Three hours of every day he teaches Allied soldiers the rudiments of Japanese; the rest of the time he resorts to thought. Such leisure is permitted because he now has certain special privileges—having been officially declared "completely harmless."

This label—and the accompanying privileges—Yamoka won about two months after his capture when an Intelligence Officer brought him a Japanese newspaper. It featured a long and reverent description of the emperor's presenting Yamoka's "ashes" with a decoration for gallant death in battle.

The young Jap read the story very carefully. After several minutes of silence he said simply, "The emperor has made a very grave error."

Then he put his head on his arms and cried. ★★★



The three Jap boys jumped the American "spy" and arrested him

