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Bones of Contention: China's World War II Military Graves in India, Burma, and Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Exploring the construction and maintenance of Nationalist Chinese soldiers' graves overseas, this article sheds light on post-World War II commemorative politics. After having fought for the Allies against Japanese aggression in the China-Burma-India Theater, the Chinese expeditionary troops sporadically received posthumous care from Chinese veterans and diaspora groups. In the Southeast Asia Theater, the Chinese soldiers imprisoned in the Japanese-run camps in Rabaul were denied burial in the Allied war cemetery and recognition as military heroes. Analyzing archival documents from China, Taiwan, Britain, Australia, and the United States, I demonstrate how the afterlife of Chinese servicemen under foreign sovereignties mattered in the making of the modern Chinese state and its international status.

Keywords

World War II – commemoration – military cemetery – war dead – China – India – Burma – Papua New Guinea

This article explores the necro-politics of China's overseas military graves in the late 1940s, uncovering how the afterlife of the expeditionary soldiers mattered in the construction of the modern Chinese state and its international status. Analyzing archival documents in China, Taiwan, Britain, Australia, and the United States, I maintain that resources, historical precedents, and diplomacy played key roles in determining the fate of fallen Chinese expeditionary force soldiers and prisoners of war, and that the absence of proper care for these war dead in turn reflected and influenced the status of China under

the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨, GMD) in the postwar era. My research demonstrates that the GMD government under Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 (1887-1975), though exhausted by the eight years of war with Japan and threatened by the growing power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), continued to make earnest efforts to care for its fallen soldiers in the jungles of India, Burma, and New Guinea. Lack of resources, stability, and planning nonetheless prevented the Nationalists from fulfilling their duty to the war dead. When the tide of the Civil War began to turn in 1947,¹ the Nationalists could no longer financially and mentally afford to commemorate their World War II heroes.

Nationalist China did not establish an office similar to the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS)² and the British Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC),³ which handle war cemeteries in domestic and foreign territories. Furthermore, as China was not a party to the international legal agreements over foreign military burials developed during World War I, the Euro-American Allies were not obligated to make final arrangements for fallen Chinese soldiers. In other words, Chinese soldiers' graves in various towns in Burma and India, and in Rabaul, were not covered by the international law concerning overseas graves, which required complying nations to administer war graves of foreign nationals within their boundaries. In addition, because of "legal Orientalism," which implies the lack of so-called universal and natural law in non-Western societies,⁴ minimal effort to establish legal measures for the Chinese war dead was made during World War II.

1 Odd Arne Westad argues that 1947 was the crucial year during which the Nationalist government failed to consolidate its territorial gains, popular support, and international alliances, all of which contributed to its defeat. Westad 2003, 9.

2 The American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) was created shortly after the U.S. entered World War I. By the end of World War I, the AGRS had established six cemeteries in Europe for approximately 30,000 fallen Americans and transported 47,000 bodies to the United States. During World War II, the AGRS took care of more than 250,000 Americans in cemeteries around the world. Anders 1988. The AGRS became the Mortuary Affairs in 1911.

3 The Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) was established by Royal Charter in 1917. It identified 587,000 graves and registered a further 559,000 casualties without known grave by the end of World War I. In the 1920s and 1930s, the IWGC built over 2,400 cemeteries in France, Belgium, and other parts of Europe. The IWGC built 559 new cemeteries and 36 memorials for casualties of the Second World War. Since the 1960s, under a new name, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), it has maintained cemeteries and built new ones with new discoveries of war casualties. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, "History of the CWGC."

4 I refer to a broader implication of "legal Orientalism" than the specific meanings presented in Ruskola 2013.

The war dead during the Republican era (1912-1949) were cared for by their families, local communities, native-place associations, philanthropists' groups, religious societies, international organizations, and funeral companies.⁵ While building public cemeteries was part of the Nationalist agenda, it was mainly carried out at the local level.⁶ During the War of Resistance, the Military Affairs Commission (*Junshi weiyuanhui* 軍事委員會) proposed to build national martyrs' cemeteries (*guoshang muyuan* 國殤墓園). However, the proposal remained only on paper.⁷ The Nationalist government therefore relied on local Chinese migrants' groups and former soldiers to provide information and look after its overseas graves. These informally arranged agencies lacked not only official recognition and protection from local authorities, but also the administrative stability and integration of government offices. Consequently, in the late 1940s when the fleeing Nationalist government no longer provided the financial support, many Chinese veterans and migrants chosen to guard the graves left on their own accord. Some replacements were murdered. Others were arrested by local authorities on charges of criminal activities and disputes with local communities. Poverty and thievery within the Chinese diaspora in the region led to the cemeteries being completely abandoned.

Postwar international politics erased the memory of the Chinese expeditionary soldiers. The formation of postcolonial states along China's borders, Cold War politics, and China's wars with its neighbors from the mid-1940s to 1960s further dimmed the significance of the Chinese war graves. Failing to properly maintain the overseas graves and commemorate the fallen World War II soldiers, the Nationalists lost the war of memories to the Communists. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has since perpetuated its own version of the War of Resistance without crediting the Nationalist soldiers.⁸ Furthermore, during the 1950s-1970s, the PRC avoided raising historical animosities with

5 See Nedostup 2017; Henriot 2016; Jessup 2010; Reeves 2007.

6 Article 1 of the 1936 "Measures to Locally Construct Public Cemeteries for Fallen Officers and Soldiers" (*Ge di jianzhu zhenwang jiangshi gongmu banfa* 各地建築陣亡將士公墓辦法) stipulated that "localities with fallen service members build their own public cemeteries in order to bury the loyal bodies." "President of the Executive Yuan, Chiang Kai-shek, to National Government," April 30, 1936, GMZF AH 001-012049-0018, file 50050101. A number of counties in Shanxi, Gansu, Sichuan, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Yunnan, and Shandong established public cemeteries during the 1930s and 1940s.

7 "Chinese Military Affairs Commission to National Government via Executive Yuan," February 24, 1941, EY AH 014000003554.

8 In 2015, Beijing officially acknowledged the contribution of Nationalist forces in fighting the Japanese by inviting Nationalist veterans to attend the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the end of World War II. Mitter 2017, 263.

Japan in order to change Tokyo's non-recognition of Beijing and weaken Japan's alliance with the United States.⁹ The War of Resistance commemorative wave began to surge in the 1980s as a means to forestall democratic unrest.¹⁰ The memory of China's involvement in the China-Burma-India Theater has recently been brought to light as the PRC and the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC) contend over the right to commemorate these war martyrs. In the last two decades, news about these graves has resurfaced in both Chinese and Taiwanese media. Groups of veterans went after old maps and oral tales to uncover graves long swallowed by the jungles. The new interest in the overseas graves of fallen Chinese soldiers signifies larger questions, particularly with regard to the notion of sovereignty and relationships between nation-states. With the fading memories of the Civil War, both the ROC and the PRC have begun reaching into their common past for an episode of the "united front" and acknowledging the symbolic power of these dead Chinese soldiers. Spirits of the dead are conjured up to serve present-day concerns.¹¹

In the following pages, I begin by analyzing the circumstances under which Chinese troops ended up in places outside China and the fates of these untimely dead. I then spend the rest of the article examining the afterlife of Chinese soldiers in a typology of case studies. First, the cemetery in Ramgarh demonstrates how soldiers of China—the fourth Allied nation—were denied posthumous care not due to the lack of resources, but because of the distrust of China's intentions and unfavorable perception of the Chinese military. Second, the mixed bones of soldiers of different nationalities in Barrackpore raise the questions of ownership and legal precedents (or the lack thereof). Third, the six cemeteries in Burma bring up major issues of multiple sovereignties, extra-legality, and ethnic tension. Last but not least, the case of the cemetery in Rabaul highlights deliberate political amnesia.

1 China's First Global War

The history of China's active participation in the Second World War beyond its borders has been largely unknown in the West.¹² The disregarded posthumous fate of fallen Chinese soldiers reflects the unstable footing of Nationalist

9 He 2007.

10 He 2007.

11 For more on presentism in viewing the past in Asia, see Mitter 2017 and Sneider 2013.

12 Mitter 2013.

China in the international arena. China's failure to negotiate with the Allies and postcolonial neighboring states over the proper care for its war dead in the aftermath of World War II demonstrates China's continued endurance of international prejudice since the mid-nineteenth century.

The Chinese expeditionary soldiers did not arrive in Burma under the best circumstances. Chiang Kai-shek sought to forge alliances with Great Britain and the United States in exchange for resources. Nationalist China became one of the Allies despite its past conflicts with Euro-American powers.¹³ The Sino-Western alliance was nonetheless tenuous. Chiang Kai-shek offered Chinese troops to the British for the defense of Burma several times in 1941 and 1942 in exchange for material support but was declined.¹⁴ Amidst tensions within the Allied camp, the Japanese completed their invasion of Burma, occupying three-fourths of the country by the end of the summer of 1942.¹⁵ For their attempt to recover Burma, the British relied on the Chinese troops who were trained in American-sponsored training camps at Ramgarh. As of October 1942, there were over ten thousand Chinese soldiers in India and plans were in place to accept up to eighteen thousand.¹⁶ The British confirmed that they would be comfortable with twenty thousand Chinese soldiers for logistical reasons.¹⁷ The India Office pointed out numerous reasons for limiting the number of Chinese troops. The arrival of the troops would open the border to Chinese migrants who did not get along well with Burmese locals. The Government of India conveyed its perception that "the Generalissimo is naturally anxious to have as many Chinese troops as possible properly fed, equipped and trained; ... he has in mind far more the value of a strong army at his own personal disposal after the war than the more immediate purpose of recapturing Burma."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the number of Chinese soldiers flown to the Ramgarh Training Center kept rising as U.S. Army General Joseph Stilwell (1883-1946) pressured the British to bring in more manpower. In May 1943, the Chinese soldiers amounted to 23,722 at Ramgarh and 10,663 at Ledo.¹⁹ In early

13 Van de Ven et al. 2014.

14 Chiang "repeatedly offered" Major General Lancelot Ernest Dennys and General Archibald Wavell, British Commander-in-Chief in India, to send two Chinese army corps to reinforce Burma. However, his offers were declined with the excuse that Burma only needed three regiments. "Madame Chiang Kai-shek to Mr. Lauchlin Currie, Administration Assistant to President Roosevelt," January 18, 1942. Noble and Perkins 1956, 5.

15 Lathrop 1981, 403-32.

16 "General Staff, Allies Liaison Section," October 13, 1942, BL 10R L/PS/12/2320.

17 "Operations: Chinese Troops in India, 1943-1944," October 2, 1942, BL 10R L/WS/1/1363.

18 "Viceroy of India to Secretary of State for India," June 13, 1943, BL 10R L/PS/12/2320.

19 "Commander in Chief [India] to War Office [London]," May 17, 1943, BL 10R L/PS/12/2320.

1944, Stilwell, as the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command, demanded an increase of Chinese troops from 76,000 to 102,000, to which the British reluctantly agreed.²⁰ According to Anglo-American official documents, the number of Chinese troops in Burma and India reached a maximum of approximately 90,000 in November 1944.²¹ Many more Chinese soldiers crossed the border into Burma.

While the Chinese troops fought on the side of the Allies, both the Anglo-American and the Chinese sides were suspicious of each other's intentions. The British had to depend on the Chinese troops, all the while feeling chary of China's presence in their part of the world and China's demands in exchange for military support.²² The Governor of Burma, Colonel Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith (1899-1977), was anxious that China was using the Burma Campaign as an opportunity to gain standing in the global arena.²³ A report on February 6, 1942, highlighted the British concern: "Chiang Kai Shek is now inclined to enter *our* political sphere [emphasis added]."²⁴ Later statements were along the same line: "the Chiangs were very sharp in their dealings. While offering military aid, Madame Chiang insisted on air support for the Chinese troops."²⁵ In another report dated August 4, 1942, the Burma Office expressed its concern about an extortionist plot from the Chinese side.²⁶ The mistrust of the Chinese military was also reflected in the perceptions of some British servicemen of their Chinese allies. In oral interviews conducted by the Imperial War Museums, Jack McFarlane, a liaison officer to the Chinese Expeditionary Force with the British Staff Mission in Burma and India from 1941 to 1942, described the Chinese soldiers whom he had encountered as being brave, yet "mindlessly following orders."²⁷ Such uncomplimentary views of their Chinese counterparts by British politicians, military leaders, and officers determined the posthumous fate of these soldiers.

Due to military clashes, disease, and accidents, Chinese soldiers' graves and other smaller burial sites sprouted along the Burma Road stretching

20 "Government of India to Secretary of State for India," May 24, 1944, BL 10R L/PS/12/2320.

21 "Arminia to Indian Army Liaison Mission," November 19, 1944, BL 10R L/PS/12/2320.

22 "Burma Office Annual Files 1937-1948," February 6, 1942, BL 10R M/3/776.

23 The Government of Burma was in exile at Simla, India, during the Japanese invasion (May 1942 to October 1945).

24 "Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma," February 6, 1942, BL 10R M/3/776.

25 "Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma," July 4, 1942, BL 10R M/3/776.

26 The Chinese side demanded 30,000 tons of rice for use inside China. "Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma," August 4, 1942, BL 10R M/3/776.

27 "Jack McFarlane's Interview," OHC IWM # 9782, reel 1, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009566> (accessed May 16, 2016).

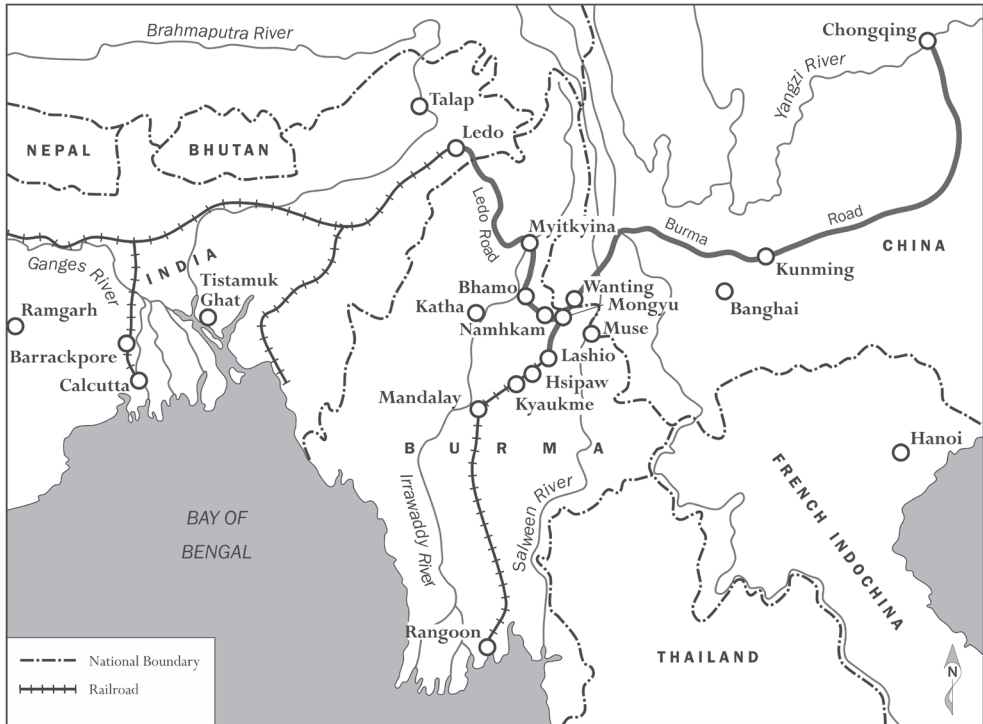


FIGURE 1 India-Burma-China border
MAP BY DEBBIE NEWELL

from Kunming to Lashio. In India, another twenty thousand Chinese officers and soldiers were buried in five main sites and in scattered gravesites (one in Tistamukh Ghat). There were two graveyards in Ledo—one at Mile 3 and another at Mile 19—on the Stilwell Road. The Mile 3 site had approximately 375 graves, most of which contained ten bodies each. The Mile 19 cemetery contained approximately 650 graves with about ten bodies each, according to the headstones. In Burma, there were over 2,000 graves scattered over six locations. The cemetery in Myitkyina contained the remains of two commanding officers, 116 junior officers, and over 1,600 soldiers. The cemetery in Namhkam contained 383 bodies, and the one in Bhamo 198 bodies. Numbers of bodies in the cemeteries in Mongyu and Lashio had not been obtained as of 1947.²⁸

In addition to the cemeteries, Chinese troops and local communities built a number of memorials in the Sino-Burmese border region. In

28 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," June 9, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

1945, the New First Army erected a commemorative tower in Banghai 邦海, Yunnan, and the Independent First Infantry Regiment built another in Kyaukme (*Jiaomai* 皎脈), Burma. Both sites were to commemorate the end of World War II.²⁹ A local Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group in Burma informed the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon in 1948 that they would build a monument in a town named Katha (*Jiesha* 杰沙) to commemorate the fallen and missing expeditionary soldiers who fought the Japanese in 1942.³⁰ For this purpose, the Mutual Aid Group asked the Chinese Ministry of Defense (MOD) for the list of names of killed or missing combatants and received a positive reply.³¹

In the Southeast Asian Theater, the Japanese took about 1,500 Chinese prisoners-of-war to Rabaul in New Britain, an island off the coast of New Guinea then under the Australian mandate. Many of the prisoners were Nationalist servicemen who had been captured during the 1937 Battle of Shanghai while others were civilians who had been residing in Malaya and New Britain. Approximately 653 people, about 377 military and 276 civilian, died due to hard labor, torture, and execution. They were buried in Bitu Paka, south of Rabaul.

2 Grave Concerns in India

The Nationalist military command in India actively sought financial support from the American forces to build a military cemetery in Ramgarh. On February 18, 1944, Zheng Dongguo 鄭洞國, the second-in-command of the New First Army, estimated the construction of the cemetery in Ramgarh in the vicinity of 70,000 rupees, about 23,000 US dollars, and requested that General Stilwell account for the actual cost. Given that the Marshall Plan would cost America 13 billion US dollars, 23,000 US dollars to properly bury these Chinese soldiers was a small amount. From March to August of 1944, Zheng Dongguo urgently and repeatedly asked for the funds, citing the Lend-Lease Act (*zujie an* 租借案) in his communications to Stilwell.³² Later in August, Zheng reported

29 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," January 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0010.

30 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA, to be forwarded to Chinese MOD," August 27, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0011.

31 The MOD ordered its Historical Administration Office (*Shizhengju* 史政局) to provide the information. "Chinese MOD to Chinese MFA," October 18, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0011.

32 The Lend-Lease policy, or Act to Promote the Defense of the United States, was enacted on March 11, 1941. Under this program, the U.S. supplied the Allied nations with provisions,

TABLE 1 Burials of Chinese Soldiers in India, Burma, and New Guinea

Location	Name in Chinese	Number of graves	Number of bodies	Establishment date
Ramgarh	<i>Lanjia</i> 蘭伽	500-600	Unknown	1944
Ledo	<i>Lieduo</i> 列多 or <i>Leiduo</i> 雷多	1,025	12,000	1945
Talap	<i>Tanpu</i> 灘浦 or <i>Tanqinpu</i> 灘勤浦	300	Unknown	1945(?)
Gaumate	<i>Gaodian</i> 高店 or <i>Gaohedian</i> 高赫店	20	27	1945(?)
Barrackpore	<i>Balekeboer</i> 巴勒克波爾	Unknown	20	1944
Myitkyina	<i>Mizhina</i> 密支那	Unknown	1,700	1945
Bhamo	<i>Bamo</i> 八莫	Unknown	198	1945
Namhkam	<i>Nankan</i> 南坎	Unknown	383	1945
Mongyu	<i>Mangyou</i> 芒友	Unknown	Unknown	1945
Lashio	<i>Laxu</i> 腊戌	Unknown	Unknown	1945
Hsipaw	<i>Xibo</i> 昔卜	Unknown	Unknown	1945
Rabaul	<i>Labaoer</i> 拉包爾	653	653	1946

that he was raising money from the troops and local Chinese for the cemetery while continuing negotiation with Stilwell over who would be the financier for the Chinese fallen soldiers' cemeteries.

Communications among American and British military leaders in Burma and India further revealed that both the U.S. and Britain tried to pass the task of financing the Chinese Military Cemetery in Ramgarh to each other. In October 1944, the American leadership in India finally informed the Chinese government that the Government of India would follow "the normal procedure" to procure funds from the Lend-Lease. Although the Government of India appointed a financial adviser to be in charge of the construction, its Military Affairs Finance Counsellor was doubtful that Britain would follow through with the agreed-upon funding. The Counsellor suggested that the Chinese government confirm directly with the British government about the cemetery's financing.³³ This suspicion was later confirmed by a communication from

oil, and weaponry. Roosevelt agreed to extend the Lend-Lease to China a few days after the Act was passed. China received 15 million dollars in 1941 for the construction of a railroad from Burma into China. After the Japanese army seized the Burma Road, China received over 30,000 tons of supplies by air. From 1941 to 1943, the value of aid transferred to China amounted to 201 million dollars, and another 191.7 million dollars were consigned to the American commanding general in the China-Burma-India Theater for transfer to China. United States Department of State 1967, 26-28.

33 "Government of India's Military Affairs to Governor of India," October 1944, MFA AH 020-060100-00197-010; also found in MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

Colonel Arcadi Gluckman in Ramgarh to General Haydon LeMaire Boatner in Ledo in December 1944: Britain had refused to honor the Lend-Lease and declined to pay the 70,000 rupees required for the construction of the Chinese cemetery in Ramgarh. The Chinese Army were nonetheless determined to complete it themselves by raising money from private sources. The American side unhappily speculated that the responsibility of procuring the funds would be on them while the Chinese generals would keep the money for themselves. Gluckman warned Boatner to proceed with caution as they “may be holding the baby with soiled rear and someone else hold [*sic*] the seventy thousand rupees if there be such.”³⁴

By early 1945, the Chinese Army in India gave up on requesting finance from the British administration and turned to the Nationalist government. Zheng telegraphed Chiang Kai-shek on February 1, informing the Generalissimo that the construction of the cemetery for officers and soldiers in Ramgarh was delayed due to the lack of funds. Zheng requested that the Nationalist government dispense 80,000 rupees (about 27,000 US dollars) for the construction.³⁵ Zheng Dongguo also asserted to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) that the cemetery had to be completed before the impending departure of the Chinese New First Army from India.³⁶ It was unlikely that the money would be forthcoming from Chongqing. Zheng turned to the American commanders in India, who offered assistance with the Chinese military cemetery project. In February 1945, U.S. Army Brigadier General John A. Warden telegraphed the Chinese Commissioner to India, Shen Shihua 沈士華 (1900–?), to request further instructions concerning Chinese war dead in Burma and India.³⁷ The Chinese Ministry of Military Administration (*Junzheng bu* 軍政部) agreed to the plan of cremating the bodies, placing them in earthen urns (*yaoqi* 窯器), burying them locally, and adding signage (*biaozhi* 標識) on their graves. The Chinese and American sides would accomplish the burial task together.³⁸ General Warden also suggested that “a priest or Army Chaplain shall officiate at the time of burial.”³⁹ Although cremation and blessing from a priest were

34 “Gluckman to Boatner,” December 21, 1944, Outgoing Messages 1944-1945, U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theaters of Operations, the Chinese Army in India (CIA) Records of the Sub-Headquarters, RG 493, Box 56, NARA ARC# 6782671.

35 “Zheng Dongguo to Chiang Kai-shek,” February 1, 1945, MFA AH 002-060100-00197-010.

36 “Chinese New First Army to the Chinese MFA,” May 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

37 “Warden to Shen,” February 6, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

38 “Chinese Ministry of Military Administration’s telegram,” March 31, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

39 “Shen to Covell,” April 2, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

not common practices in China, the Chinese MFA offered no objection. In 1936 and in 1940, the Nationalist government had issued various guidelines to provincial, municipal, and county governments on the proper ritual of honoring national martyrs, regulating such matters as the color of the spirit tablet, the use of music, and the replacement of sacrificial food with flowers.⁴⁰ Still, the fallen Chinese soldiers in India were cremated, blessed, and buried in “ordinary urns purchasable from local markets,” at the price of five rupees each.⁴¹ This arrangement give a new meaning to China being a “third-rank ally.”⁴² Its dead received minimal courtesy.

Accepting the most economical option, the Chinese side however proposed an important modification to the burial plan. The Chinese MFA requested that the interment of these urns be accompanied with “tombstones or other identification posts duly erected.”⁴³ Referring to the possibility of marking the graves with gravestones, the Chinese leaders perhaps hoped to bargain for a permanent arrangement for the afterlife of the Chinese forces in India instead of having to transport their remains to China. There would have been no possible arrangement for these Chinese soldiers had they been transported back to China. China had only one national military cemetery located in Nanjing and dedicated to the Northern Expedition officers and soldiers.⁴⁴ Tracking down and sending the remains to the families of these expeditionary soldiers, the majority of whom came from lower economic and social strata, would have been equally challenging.

While the American side did not share China’s expectation, it financed and completed the cremation and temporary interment of the remains in earthen urns. U.S. Army Colonel Frank Milani assured Commissioner Shen Shihua that the remains were “neatly arranged and aligned” in the temporary cemeteries,

40 “President of the Executive Yuan, Chiang Kai-shek, to National Government: Measure to Construct County Loyal Martyrs’ Shrines” (*Ge xian sheli zhonglie ci banfa* 各縣設立忠烈祠辦法), April 30, 1936, GMZF AH 001-012049-0018, file 50050101; “Executive Yuan to National Government: “General Guidelines for Offering Sacrifices to Officials and Civilians Who Loyalistically Sacrificed Their Lives during the War of Resistance and for Constructing Commemorative Tablets” (*Kangdi xunnan zhonglie guanmin cisi ji jianli jinian fangbei banfa dagang* 抗敵殉難忠烈官民祠祀及建立紀念坊碑辦法大綱),” December 23, 1940, GMZF AH 001-012100-0006, file 50148278.

41 “Headquarters Services of Supply to Commanding Officer, Subject: ‘Earthen Urns,’” April 25, 1945, U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theaters of Operations, RG 493, Box 192, NARA ARC# 6817136.

42 Mitter 2013, 313.

43 “Shen to Covell,” April 2, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

44 Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui 1936.

and that these “temporary cemeteries have been well cared for and their conversion into permanent cemeteries with individual graves can be readily accomplished.”⁴⁵ Both the Commanding General of the U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theater and the Commanding General of Chinese Army in India would be responsible for the construction of the permanent cemetery. However, a permanent cemetery would not be possible unless the British side supplied necessary funds through the Lend-Lease program to China.⁴⁶ Based on Britain’s history of refusal to cooperate, China insisted on converting the temporary burials into permanent ones by building concrete-and-brick individual graves with permanent tombstones.⁴⁷ In May 1945, Colonel Kernan reported from Ramgarh that the construction of the Chinese cemetery was a few days from completion.⁴⁸ The New First Army had raised money among its ranks and Chinese migrants to finish the cemetery.⁴⁹ After the cemetery was built, the task of maintenance was yet to be claimed by any party. Kernan hoped that eventually the British IWGC would assume responsibility for maintenance of the Chinese cemetery. Until then, he had employed Chinese Buddhist monks to live at the cemetery and to provide the upkeep on a monthly salary of 150 rupees. This was again a short-term arrangement as the American forces were about to depart, leaving the maintenance of these graves to the British authorities. However, as it had been known, “the British here at Ramgarh would rather have nothing to do with it.”⁵⁰

The issues with maintaining a permanent cemetery of Chinese soldiers in India went beyond finances. Burials of Chinese nationals would boost China’s sovereignty on the Sino-Indian border, sanctioning the presence of Chinese migrants in India. Without having to deal with contested territories

45 “Milani to Shen,” April 9, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

46 “Milani to Shen,” April 9, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

47 “Shen to Milani,” April 24, 1945, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

48 “Kernan to Bredster c/o Larson,” May 6, 1945, Outgoing Messages 1944-1945, U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theaters of Operations, the Chinese Army in India (CIA) Records of the Sub-Headquarters, RG 493, Box 56, NARA ARC# 6782671.

49 In 1946, Zheng Dongguo of the New First Army submitted to the United Quartermasters Headquarters a construction plan for the cemetery’s memorial, which included a three-segment stone gate and a stone tower. It was unclear if it was completed. “United Quartermasters of Chinese Army to Chinese MFA, including a telegram from Northeastern Security Command (*Dongbei baoan silingbu* 東北保安司令部),” March 11, 1947, MFA AH 002-060100-00197-010.

50 “Kernan to Sultan [Delhi] c/o Bredster & Larson,” May 17, 1945, Outgoing Messages 1944-1945, U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theaters of Operations, the Chinese Army in India (CIA) Records of the Sub-Headquarters, RG 493, Box 56, NARA ARC# 6782671.

and sovereignties, the American military in India was more willing than the British administration to provide help, albeit limited, with the afterlife of the Chinese expeditionary forces. Such assistance was also offered in the hope of reciprocity. Across the border, the U.S. government was simultaneously making arrangements to collect the bodies of their soldiers. The MFA ordered the municipal governments of Kunming, Chengdu, Shanghai, Tianjin, Qingdao, and Shenyang by way of the Executive Yuan to assist American agents with the excavation and transportation of 2,028 bodies to Shanghai and from there to the United States via air.⁵¹ In addition to logistical assistance, the AGRS wanted such favors as a statement from the Generalissimo or Madame Chiang to “bereaved American parents whose sons died so heroically for China and the United States.”⁵² The AGRS, with a history of caring for the war dead in foreign territories since World War I, quickly completed the tasks.⁵³ Once the AGRS had collected the American remains from China’s soil, China lost the leverage to ask the U.S. for assistance with its war dead in India.

There was no straightforward solution to the issue of maintenance. The Chinese army was adamant about the IWGC’s responsibility for maintaining the Ramgarh cemetery, but it asked for a rent-free lease of the burial ground and posted its own caretakers for its military graves in Ledo. While the Government of India preferred the arrangement at Ledo (which will be further discussed later in this article), it could not simply decline China’s request with regard to the cemetery in Ramgarh. For one, Britain was concurrently asking the Chinese government to arrange maintenance for the British cemeteries in China.⁵⁴ When the American forces withdrew from India in April 1946, the task

51 There were 2,028 bodies of American soldiers and civilians in China: Kunming: 856, Chengdu: 313, Shanghai: 519, Tianjin: 43, Qingdao: 37, and Shenyang: 260. “Executive Yuan to Chongqing Municipal Government,” November 4, 1946, CMA 53-20-409, 361-363. The AGRS report of August 15, 1946 indicated a total of 2,006 bodies of American soldiers and 32 civilians: Kunming: 847; Chengdu: 295; Mukden: 237; Shanghai: 582; Tianjin: 45; and Qingdao: 37. “Report of Burials by Cemeteries, China Zone,” August 15, 1946, 92-AGRS, RG 407, Box 53, Entry 427, NARA.

52 “Colonel Kearney to Colonel Dau (Assistant Military Attache at U.S. Embassy in Nanjing),” April 3, 1947, 92-AGRS, RG 407, Box 53, Entry 427, NARA.

53 Further reports on recovering remains of American combatants and civilians from China can be found in “American Graves Registration Service—China Zone,” January 7, 1946–November 6, 1947, 92-AGRS, RG 407, Box 53, Entry 427, NARA.

54 “Deputy Secretary to Government of India’s External Affairs Department [New Delhi], c/o Secretary of State and Government of Burma’s Defence and External Affairs Department [Rangoon],” January 22, 1946, BL IOR M/4/3072. In addition, the British were eager to identify their fallen soldiers in Chinese territory. The Chongqing Police Bureau reported to the Municipal Government in November 1946 that they did not find any soldiers’ graves in the city. CMA 53-20-409, 365.

was transferred to the British colonial administration, which then delegated it to the military. The Military Engineering Services, which was responsible for construction and maintenance work for the British armed forces, posted caretakers at the Chinese cemetery in Ramgarh. The Eastern Command, one of the four commands of the Indian Army, paid the caretakers annual salaries from April 1946 to April 1947, which totaled 544 rupees.⁵⁵ Neither side offered a permanent arrangement.

Changes in the local administration posed new challenges to the safeguarding of the Chinese military graves in India. On August 14 and 15, 1947, the last governor-general of India partitioned British India into India and Pakistan, and declared both of them independent. In January 1948, the Government of India notified the Chinese government that Ramgarh had become part of Pakistan, and the Government of Pakistan should be consulted on the matter of the Chinese military cemetery there. A scribbled note on an official document by some Chinese bureaucrat showed that China had been updated on the politics in the region. To complicate the matter, Ramgarh was in fact part of Bihar's territory, a state in the new Dominion of India.⁵⁶ If Britain as a World War II Ally did not feel obliged to provide the afterlife arrangement for the Chinese soldiers, the postcolonial administration felt even less willing to continue the upkeep of the Chinese military cemeteries. It was up to the Chinese government to figure out how to negotiate with the new administration.

While communication and payment became erratic in 1947 due to the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalist government continued to exert some effort to maintain these cemeteries. In May 1947, the Government of India notified China that there were also three hundred graves in a Chinese cemetery in Talap, Assam, for which no arrangements for maintenance had been made.⁵⁷ The Chinese Army and the local Chinese migrant community had built the cemetery in Talap after the war. Trapped in a mortal struggle with the Communist army, the Nationalists preferred the "most economical" way of paying local authorities to care for the graves in Ramgarh, Ledo, and Talap.⁵⁸ In December 1947, the Chinese Consulate sent a communication to the Government of Bihar, requesting that new arrangements be made for the cemetery in Ramgarh now that the Chinese monks posted by American officers in 1945 were long gone. The Government of Bihar was asked to employ two people to mow the lawn,

55 "Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

56 "Government of India to Ambassador of the Republic of China in India," January 28, 1948, BL IOR M/4/3072.

57 "Government of India to Ambassador of the Republic of China in India," May 27, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

58 "Yao to Shen," 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

repair the damaged tombs, and supervise the maintenance of the cemetery. The Chinese government promised to pay the expenses on an annual basis once the Government of Bihar provided the estimated cost.⁵⁹ The Assistant Adjutant General of the New Delhi Army telegraphed the Chinese government that the Military Engineer Services could assume the responsibility for maintaining the cemetery in Ramgarh for an annual fee of 1,500 rupees. Any additional repairs and new construction would be calculated and added at the beginning of each year. Each of the *chowkidars* (watchmen) would be paid 35 rupees per month, which came to 840 rupees a year. The same telegram also informed the Chinese government of the existence of three graves at Tistamukh Ghat which had never been maintained.⁶⁰

Two cemeteries in Ledo were also in need of care. The Mile 3 cemetery had no headstones and was supposedly in the custody of the Garrison Engineer for the Indian Army Headquarters at Margherita, Assam. The cemetery at Mile 19 was in “a very bad state of repair.” No disabled Chinese soldiers were posted as guards at the two locations as indicated in communications in 1945. The British military authorities in Ledo inspected the area and recommended that the cemeteries could be maintained by the Public Works Department under the Political Officer of the Tirap Frontier Tract as this office was in charge of the road passing these graves.⁶¹ The Chinese government, however, would provide the funds.⁶² Given the complex and shifting colonial rule and the presence of multifarious communities, it was difficult for China or any party to make proper arrangements for its overseas graves. Photographs included in this communication show rows of graves with stone slabs on which stone tablets were erected.

59 “Acting Consul General Tsai to Government of Bihar,” December 29, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

60 “Assistant Adjutant General of the Army Headquarters [Calcutta] to Chinese Consulate-General [Calcutta], Loh [Luo Jialun 羅家倫, 1897-1969],” January 29, 1948, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

61 When the British came to Assam, they were confronted with multiple sovereignties claimed by various hill tribes. To prevent hostilities, in 1884 they designated lines around these areas and forbade villagers to cross. In 1914, the Government of India divided them into three tracts: The Central and Eastern Tracts (which were renamed Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts in 1919), the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract, and the Western Section. The first and third were placed under the charge of Political Officers while the second was under the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur District. In 1943, certain sections of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts were formed into the Tirap Frontier Tract with headquarters in Margherita and placed under the governance of a Political Officer. Bose 1989, 24-25.

62 “Thompson to Tsai,” June 12, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

Some tablets had already collapsed to one side. The jungle slowly swallowed these grave markers.⁶³ The Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations of the Government of India added that the estimated annual upkeep by local caretakers would cost 3,000 rupees, which could possibly be reduced later. The Government of India suggested that China follow this course of action as it would “obviate the necessity of the maintenance of special staff by the Chinese government.”⁶⁴ The colonial government did not want to deal with Chinese veterans or migrants. In reply, the Chinese government did not give a definite answer and tried to strike a better deal by asking whether this arrangement and cost also included the cemeteries in Talap and Ramgarh.⁶⁵

In 1948, China made sporadic attempts to keep up with grave maintenance. The Nationalist government requested a “package deal” for all of its cemeteries in India, which was impossible because these cemeteries had come under multiple jurisdictions. The Chinese government also tried to drive a hard bargain by suggesting that the arrangements made for Ramgarh should not be too costly as the cemetery only contained 500 graves, far fewer than the two cemeteries in Ledo. The Government of India sent another communication on April 5, 1948, complaining that China had not replied to its note from January 28, 1948, and urging China to make a decision concerning its two cemeteries in Ledo. As the jungles had partially covered the cemeteries and the rainy season was approaching, the Chinese government needed to decide soon whether they would like to spend 3,000 rupees to repair these cemeteries.⁶⁶ The Embassy of China in India finally agreed in June 1948 to pay 2,340 rupees for the one in Ramgarh. As for the renovation fees, the Embassy was still in the process of seeking approval from Nanjing.⁶⁷ Then the Embassy of China went silent. The Chinese Civil War was in its final stage, with the tide turned against the Nationalist forces.

For the most part of 1949, the Ministry of External Affairs of India repeatedly requested instructions from the Chinese government with regard to the

63 “Thompson to Tsai,” June 12, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

64 “Government of India’s Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations to Republic of China’s Charge d’Affaires,” October 6, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

65 “Republic of China’s Charge d’Affaires to Government of India’s Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations,” October 6, 1947, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

66 “Government of India’s Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations to Republic of China’s Charge d’Affaires,” April 5, 1948, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

67 “Embassy of the Republic of China [New Delhi] to Government of India’s External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations,” June 26, 1948, MFA AS 11-EAP-02675.

cemetery in Ramgarh and received no reply.⁶⁸ In March 1949, India's Army Headquarters notified the Chinese Embassy that the Military Engineering Services would take charge of the cemetery in Ramgarh starting in July.⁶⁹ The Indian Ministry of External Affairs notified the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi in July 1949 that it had received the total estimated expenditure on the maintenance of the Chinese War Cemetery at Tippuk, Talap. Extensive construction was necessary, for jungles and debris had already covered the cemetery. The wire fencing no longer existed. The concrete pillars were completely broken. The plan was to clear the jungle, install brick pillars all around the cemetery, put in wire fencing, and build a wooden gate. The total cost came up to 3,761 rupees.⁷⁰ No record indicates that the Nationalist government paid this amount. However, the Nationalist government made some earnest efforts to take care of its dead soldiers. The following episode of mixed bones in Barrackpore further illustrates the extent of the Nationalist government's concern over its fallen citizens.

3 Bones of Contention in Barrackpore

In 1946, the British Embassy notified China that the U.S. government had just issued an act to collect all American citizens' bodies overseas and transport them to cemeteries in the United States.⁷¹ The AGRS representatives in the India-Burma Zone also sent a telegram to Nanjing via the American Consulate in Calcutta in May 1947, informing China that the U.S. military cemetery in Barrackpore, India, contained remains of Chinese soldiers. The remains of U.S. servicemen in the U.S. military cemetery in Barrackpore would be repatriated by the end of 1947. Therefore, the AGRS wanted to consult Nanjing about making proper arrangement for the remains of Chinese soldiers.⁷² Four were Chinese Army personnel who lost their lives due to accident or illness during

68 "Government of India's External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations to Embassy of the Republic of China [New Delhi]," March 23, 1949, MFA AH 020-011903-0014. This correspondence mentioned an unanswered telegram sent on June 26, 1948.

69 "Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, India to Military Attaché, Embassy of the Republic of China [New Delhi]," March 5, 1949, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

70 "Government of India's Ministry of External Affairs to Embassy of the Republic of China [New Delhi]," July 1, 1949, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

71 "British Embassy [Chongqing] to China MFA," 1946, NA FO 371/51699.

72 "AGRS to Chinese MFA via American Consulate in Calcutta," May 27, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

World War II.⁷³ Eight Chinese victims of plane crashes were buried in communal graves with American soldiers.⁷⁴ In such cases of communal burial of Allied war dead, the U.S. War Department had a clear policy:

If the Allied deceased cannot be segregated, the Allied Governments concerned will be asked whether or not they would interpose any objection of the shipment of the group to the United States. If no objection is forthcoming, all the remains in the group will be returned to the United States. For objection to such removal, the remains of the entire group will be finally interred in a permanent overseas American Cemetery.⁷⁵

The U.S. government therefore “strongly requested permission [from China] to transport these communal burials to National Cemeteries in the United States since there would be no permanent U.S. national cemetery located in India.”⁷⁶ In response to the inquiry from the American side, the Acting Consul General, W. P. Tsai, requested that the AGRS cremate all the remains of the Chinese soldiers, and transfer the ashes to the Chinese Military Cemetery in Ramgarh. Although China did not have field personnel in charge of the war dead and their graves in India, the Chinese consulate proposed to “contact

73 According to archival records, the first was C. F. Chang, a co-pilot who was killed in the crash of Plane C47-56. The second was P. P. Wen, Flight Operator of China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) Plane, died on November 30, 1944, at coordinates 96d 00'15" E-27d 18' N. His remains were buried as Unknowns X-69 and X-70 in Plot 2, Row E, Grave 63, since individual identification was impossible. The third was C. N. Chang, a Navy cadet, who died of pulmonary tuberculosis on April 11, 1945, at the 142nd General Hospital in Barrackpore, and was buried in Plot 3, Row Q, Grave 37. The last one was V. K. Hon, of the Chinese Army Second Combat Engineer Battalion of the New 30th Division, Ramgarh, who died of relapsing fever on February 9, 1944, and was buried in Plot 3, Row Q, Grave 39. “AGRS to Chinese MFA via American Consulate in Calcutta,” May 27, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

74 Six Chinese soldiers were buried in a communal grave with three Americans in Plot 3, Row Q, Grave 25, and two other Chinese with one American in Plot 2, Row F, Grave 44 of the U.S. Military Cemetery in Barrackpore. The first six were unknown Chinese passengers aboard U.S. Plane C-47-43-789, which crashed on April 22, 1945, about 10 miles north of Lashio, Burma. The latter two were aboard CNAC plane C-47-72, which crashed on October 13, 1943, at coordinates 97d 38' E-26d 53'N. “AGRS to Chinese MFA via American Consulate in Calcutta,” May 27, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

75 “AGRS to Chinese MFA via American Consulate in Calcutta,” May 27, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

76 “AGRS to Chinese MFA via American Consulate in Calcutta,” May 27, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

the designated officer in charge of this matter” and “to meet all the expenses involved.”⁷⁷ Tsai did not address the mixed remains of Chinese and American soldiers, tacitly acquiescing to whichever decision was made by the AGRS. Thereupon, the AGRS gifted the Chinese government implements for cremation and urns, and offered to pay 350 Indian rupees toward the cremation.⁷⁸ The mixed bones of American and Chinese soldiers were then transported to the United States.

While other options with regard to mixed burials existed, neither the Chinese nor the American side brought them up. One option could have been to follow an agreement over cases of intermingled remains signed between the British and American governments during World War I. If the majority of the remains were of British personnel, then the whole lot would be buried in a Commonwealth cemetery, and vice versa.⁷⁹ Another possible solution for the mixed bones in Barrackpore would have been dividing them in equal halves for the respective national cemeteries.

China did not contend for the mixed bones, though not because China did not value its fallen soldiers the same way that the American or the British governments did. There existed multiple reasons for the lack of effort to claim these nationally indistinguishable remains. First, the Nationalists lacked the institutions and precedents for such matters. China had no designated office to pursue the issue of mixed burials and graves in foreign jurisdiction. Because World War II was the first international war in which China participated as a nation-state, the Nationalist government had no practical experience or legal framework to deal with overseas burials. Second, China did not lack war martyrs to commemorate. The Nationalists could find other heroic narratives among its tens of millions of military and civilian casualties.⁸⁰ Third, the commemorating of martyrs in China was organized locally. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Nationalist government ordered each county and municipality to build a Loyal Martyrs' Shrine, instead of building *national* shrines and cemeteries. Last but not least, China's military participation in the Burma Campaign did not serve as good propaganda domestically.⁸¹ The general public were not en-

77 “Acting Consulate-General for China [Calcutta], W. P. Tsai, to AGRS c/o American Consulate General [Calcutta],” June 5, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

78 “Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD and Chinese Ministry of Interior,” August 15, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

79 Ward and Gibson 1989, 81.

80 For example, the Political Department of the Military Affairs Commission published two volumes of *A Compilation of Outstandingly Courageous Servicemembers and Civilians during the War of Resistance* (Kangzhan teshu zhongyong jun min timinglu 抗戰特殊忠勇軍民題名錄) in Chongqing. Li and Ren 2012, vol. 10, 233-626, vol. 11, 1-438.

81 There was no mention of the expeditionary soldiers among the 183,000 deaths listed in the *Record of Names of Loyal and Sacrificing Officers and Soldiers of the Republic of China*.

thused about the fact that the Nationalist troops defended a colonial administration of Britain, which had impinged upon China's sovereignty in the past. Outwardly, Dr. T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen 宋子文, 1894-1971), Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, claimed that these soldiers died for the international alliance with the Allied nations.⁸² These soldiers were, however, portrayed as "loyally and heroically sacrificing for the nation" (*zhongyong weiguo xisheng* 忠勇為國犧牲) in a communication from General Sun Liren 孫立人 (1900-1990), the deputy commander of the New First Army, to the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁸³ The lack of institutions, precedents, and motivations explained better the absence of posthumous care for the Chinese expeditionary soldiers.

4 Multiple Sovereignties along the Burma Road

In 1945, the Chinese military established cemeteries in Myitkyina, Bhamo, Namhkam, Mongyu, Lashio, and Hsipaw. Myitkyina had two adjacent sites, one built by the Sixth Army and the other by the New First Army. Hsipaw had two adjacent burial sites, built by the New First Army and the Independent First Infantry Regiment.⁸⁴ In September 1945, Hu Weihua 胡蔚華, a Chinese army veteran and caretaker of the Lashio cemetery, provided a report which included a pictorial map of the cemetery in Lashio. The three-acre cemetery, located on a hill at a road junction, was enclosed with posts and fences. The gate led to a monument in the center, flanked by two towers and two graveyards.⁸⁵

After the construction, the issue was how to formalize the presence of these cemeteries in Burma. In his letter to the British Embassy in August 1945, T. V. Soong insisted that:

Chinese and British troops, fighting side by side in the counter-attack on Burma over a period of years, have conquered the enemy and won the

This collection, compiled by the United Quartermasters in 1947, covers the deaths of the GMD military from 1926 to 1947. Li and Ren 2012.

82 "T. V. Soong to British Embassy [Chongqing]," August 1, 1945, BL IOR/M/4/3072.

83 "Chinese Ministry of Military Administration to Chinese MFA, including Sun Liren's report," July 1945, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

84 There was little information concerning the graves in Hsipaw. Most documents of the Chinese government mentioned only five sites in Burma: Myitkyina, Namhkam, Bhamo, Mongyu, and Lashio. For example, see "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," January 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

85 "Chinese Military Affairs Commission to Chinese MFA, including a report from Hu Weihua submitted to the New First Army commander Sun Liren," January 25, 1946, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

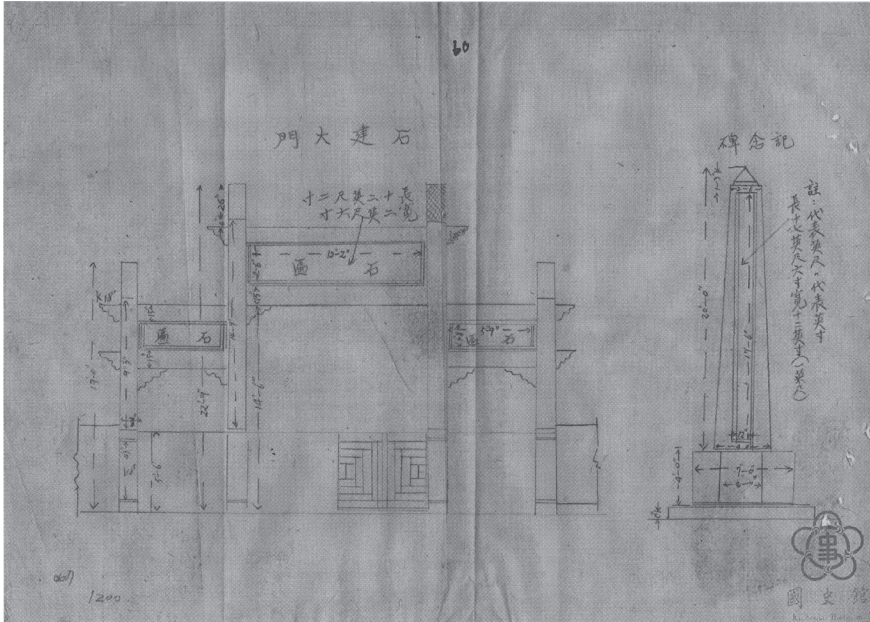


FIGURE 2 The Chinese soldiers' cemetery in Lashio
COURTESY OF ACADEMIA HISTORICA

victory, till now the greater part of the lost territory of Burma has happily been recovered. In these united operations casualties among the brave and self-sacrificing Chinese troops have been very heavy, and it is only proper that their bodies should be interred together in selected places along the route followed by them, and that monuments should be erected to commemorate the loyalty of the dead ... In consideration of the friendship between China and Great Britain, allies in the common struggle, the land for these six cemeteries may be presented to the Chinese Government, that the officers and men acting as care-takers referred to above may be permitted to reside there in perpetuity, and that permanent resident certificates may be issued to them.⁸⁶

Soong did not refer to any international laws or regulations because there was none. He insisted on the *friendship* and *alliance*, both of which, judging from Britain's aversion toward the flood of Chinese troops and civilian migrants into Burma and India, were rather feeble. When Chiang Kai-shek tried to send more soldiers to Ramgarh to be trained for the Burma Reoccupation Campaign, the

86 "T. V. Soong to British Embassy [Chongqing]," August 1, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

India Office worried that Chiang was seeking to have his troops trained, outfitted, and armed for the upcoming civil war with the Communist army. When the Chiangs pushed for more air support for the Chinese army, the India Office cared more about the lack of fuel than Chinese lives on the ground.⁸⁷

While Soong's appeals in 1945 may not have had much impact, the British Embassy in Chongqing in 1946 promised Dr. K. C. Wu (Wu Guozhen 吳國楨, 1903-1984), Mayor of Chongqing and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, that permission would be "granted to the caretaker and his dependent(s) to reside on the land comprising the Chinese War Cemetery for so long as he is employed by the (formally constituted body) as official caretaker of that cemetery."⁸⁸ The British Embassy also insisted that the caretaker "does not engage in any private occupation for gain and that his conduct is satisfactory, and will be revoked in the case of a breach of either of these conditions."⁸⁹ However, there was no "formally constituted body" of the Chinese government to be in charge of hiring and paying the caretakers in Burma. The task fell into the lap of the Chinese MFA, which requested that land for six cemeteries be presented to the Chinese government, that two or three disabled officers and men who had already been sent to each cemetery as caretakers might be permitted to reside there in perpetuity, and that permanent resident certificates be given to them. China insisted that the land should be granted as a "courteous gesture to an Ally" and some sort of legal residency granted to the caretakers.⁹⁰ The British Consul General in Chongqing, Horace Seymour, called attention to the fact that the Chinese MFA intentionally did not use the phrase "overseas Chinese" to refer to the caretakers.⁹¹ China and Britain had diverging views about the legal status of these caretakers in Burma, which became a bone of contention.

On August 20, 1945, the War Office in London sent a communication to the Foreign Office, the India Office, the Burma Office, and the IWGC, citing the agreement signed between the French and English governments during the First World War:

... the Chinese are in very much the same position vis-à-vis the Governments of India and Burma as was His Majesty's Government

87 "Burma Office Annual Files," April 7, 1942, BL IOR M/3/776; "Minutes of a meeting held at the India Office on October 2, 1942," BL IOR L/WS/1/1362.

88 "British Embassy [Chongqing] to Chinese MFA," January 1946, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

89 "British Embassy [Chongqing] to Chinese MFA," January 1946, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

90 "Seymour [Chongqing] to Foreign Office, repeated to SACSEA, Government of India, and Government of Burma," August 7, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

91 "Seymour [Chongqing] to Foreign Office, repeated to SACSEA, Government of India, and Government of Burma," August 7, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

vis-à-vis the Governments of certain Allies after the last war. In the latter case the difficulty of a Government holding land in the territory of another Government was overcome by the conclusion of a series of enactments and agreements of which the French Law of the 29th December 1915 and the Anglo-French agreement of the 26th November 1918 are typical.⁹²

The results of that law and agreement were that France bought the land on which the British cemeteries stood and granted the IWGC the right to construct and maintain in perpetuity the cemeteries on that land. The agreement also stipulated that maintenance might be entrusted to "*associations régulièrement constituées.*" In its relations with the French civil and military authorities, the IWGC, as a "duly constituted association" and represented by a mixed Anglo-French Committee, meets occasionally to settle matters of policy. The law was re-enacted with minor amendments in February 1940, and the agreement was extended to cover war graves of World War II. In 1945, the War Office suggested that the status of the Chinese cemeteries in question be subject to similar arrangements.⁹³ Settling the grave concerns was not an easy task when the decision-making process involved many parties.

However, the Government of Burma begged to differ. While the cemetery in Ledo was within the jurisdiction of the Government of India, there were five other Chinese cemeteries in Burma. With regard to these five, the Government of Burma recommended a land grant and a restricted number of caretakers. There was also the issue that the colonial government did not have complete control over an ethnically diverse and divided Burma at the local level:

Our preliminary views are that a revenue free grant could be made to Diplomatic Representative of Chinese Government in Burma with special provision that only specified number of persons appointed as caretakers could live within limits of grant and that no trade or profession should be carried on within these limits. This we consider very necessary in view of expansionist tendencies of Chinese in North Burma. Three cemeteries are probably on land within the state of North Hsenwi but no difficulty with Sawbwa is expected. We are opposed to conferring extra territorial status or any degree of Chinese sovereignty over these areas.⁹⁴

92 "War Office [London] to Foreign Office, India Office, Burma Office and Imperial War Graves Commission," August 20, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

93 "War Office [London] to Foreign Office, India Office, Burma Office and Imperial War Graves Commission," August 20, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

94 "Government of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma," August 23, 1945, BL IOR/M/4/3072. North Hsenwi was a Shan state in Burma. Sawbwa was a royal title used by rulers of the

The Foreign Office responded that despite “concerns about Chinese encroachment, this land grant should be made promptly as a courtesy to an ally and also because similar requests were made by His Majesty’s Government with the Chinese government.”⁹⁵ After consulting the Government of Assam over the Chinese cemetery in Ledo in August, the Government of India received a reply in November. While the “request of Chinese relates only to cemeteries on the Stilwell Road, and not to others,” the Governor of Assam “[agreed] that lease of the land in perpetuity is best course and [had] no objection to grant of residential permits to suitable caretakers.”⁹⁶ Having confirmed with various governments, Horace Seymour from the British Embassy communicated to Wang Shih-chieh (Wang Shijie 王世杰, 1891-1981), Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, that:

In the case of the five war cemeteries [excluding Hsipaw] situated in Burma the Government of Burma will, in accordance with international usage in these matters, be happy to make a rent-free grant of land to a formally constituted Chinese body, with the right to construct cemeteries thereon and maintain them in perpetuity. The Government of Burma will further be willing to allow a specified number of persons appointed as caretakers to live within the limits, of each such grant, accompanied, subject to the prior approval in each case of the Government of Burma, by their families. The Chinese Government will, however, appreciate that no trade or profession can be carried on within the limits of the territory granted. The Government of Burma would issue to each caretaker a certificate in the form indicated by the enclosed specimen.⁹⁷

This sounded like a decent solution from the British point of view, but not for China. As the Chinese MOD did not have an office to deal with public cemeteries located out of the country, the management of Chinese military cemeteries in India and Burma would have to depend on the Consulates in

Shan States. Under the British colonial administration, the Shan States were considered sovereign entities ruled by local monarchs (*sawbwa*) yet administered by British commissioners.

- 95 “Foreign Office [London] to Government of Burma,” November 20, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.
 96 “Government of India to Foreign Office,” November 20, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072. The Ledo Road and the upgraded portion of the Burma Road from Mongyu to Kunming were later named the Stilwell Road. The Stilwell Road covered 1,079 miles from Ledo to Kunming.
 97 “Seymour to Wang Shih-chieh [Wang Shijie],” January 24, 1946, NA FO 371/51699.

these areas.⁹⁸ As the Chinese Consulates were located in major cities, such as Rangoon, Calcutta, and New Delhi, local Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Groups handled various management aspects of the cemeteries in remote towns. After the majority of the Chinese military had withdrawn, the role of Chinese migrant communities was critical in maintaining these gravesites. Ex-soldiers and Chinese migrants subsequently appointed as grave keepers in far-flung parts of Burma frequently turned to the local Chinese communities for financial and bureaucratic assistance.

5 Cemetery Caretakers: Making a Living Out of the Dead

The cemeteries for fallen Chinese soldiers in Ledo, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Namhkam, Mongyu, and Lashio had been completed and some veterans had been posted as caretakers by mid-1945. On July 24, 1945, the Supreme Allied Command South East Asia (SACSEA) notified the Foreign Office that the Chinese New First Army in India had requested permission from the Commanding General of the China-Burma-India Theater to hire fifteen permanent cemetery caretakers.⁹⁹ The caretakers would be ex-soldiers deemed “unfit for military duty on account of wounds incurred on active service when in the employ of the Chinese government.” The governments of India and Burma would register the veterans as “overseas Chinese” so that they could be legal residents. In addition, the Commanding General requested on behalf of the Chinese Government that the ground occupied by these cemeteries be presented “as a gift in perpetuity to the Chinese Government.”¹⁰⁰ The Commanding General also requested the SACSEA headquarters to begin to facilitate between the governments concerned. SACSEA, however, suggested that “action towards the governments concerned should be initiated officially by the Chinese Government.”¹⁰¹ SACSEA assured the Chinese government that in the meantime the Allied Land Forces South East Asia would provide care for these graves.¹⁰²

In a telegram dated August 1945, the Chinese MFA updated the status of cemetery caretakers, listing in detail the weaponry these ex-soldiers had in

98 “United Quartermasters of Chinese Army to Chinese MFA,” January 11, 1947, MFA AH 020-011903-0014.

99 From 1943 to 1946, the Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command was Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900-1979).

100 “SACSEA to Foreign Office,” July 24, 1945, BL IOR M/4/307.

101 “SACSEA to Foreign Office,” July 24, 1945, BL IOR M/4/307.

102 “SACSEA to Foreign Office,” July 24, 1945, BL IOR M/4/307.

their possession. Three former servicemen of the 6th Company, 113th Regiment, 38th Division were posted as guards at the Ledo cemetery. Zhang Lequn was a 28-year-old corporal and a native of Yongchuan, Sichuan. The two others were first-class privates, Zhao Jincheng, 37 years old, from Shangqiu, Henan, and Chen Shaoming, 28 years old, from Meishan, Sichuan.¹⁰³ The Lashio cemetery had only one guard, named Hu Weihua 胡蔚華, a 35-year-old Guizhou native without family. Two of the three guards at Mongyu cemetery were two former sergeants of the 7th Company, 112th Regiment, 38th Division: Zhou Zhiming 周智明, 32 years old, a native of Hunan, and Huang Renxun 黃仁訊, 27 years old. The third was Yuan Guanghui 袁光輝, 25 years old, from Hunan, a former sergeant of the 114th Regiment, 38th Division. The Bhamo cemetery employed three guards. Zhou Bin 周斌, a 38-year-old native of Baoxing, Hunan, was a warrant officer of the 6th Company, 114th Regiment, 38th Division. Huang Qianfeng 黃千峰 was 28 years old, from Lixian, Hunan, and a sergeant major of the 8th Company, 112th Regiment, 38th Division. Yang Jidong 楊濟東 was a 50-year-old migrant Chinese from Dengyue. All three guards had families. Yang had two daughters, Yuan Huan and Yuan Sunxing. None of the guards at the cemeteries in Ledo, Lashio, and Bhamo carried arms.¹⁰⁴

Signs of trouble soon surfaced. In September 1945, the local Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group notified the MFA that Zhou, Huang, and Yuan were having a hard time getting by at the cemetery in Mongyu and were about to leave.¹⁰⁵ The Government of Burma on March 11, 1946, expressed concern about the jurisdiction of the Chinese Consulate over Chinese nationals outside Rangoon.¹⁰⁶ In September 1946, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs forwarded a complaint to the British Embassy in China that the Government of Burma had failed to prevent “hilltop soldiers” (*shantou bing* 山頭兵) from destroying the visitors’ pavilion of the Chinese War Dead Cemetery at Mongyu and harassing the Chinese migrants that wanted to pay homage and sweep the graves.¹⁰⁷ Six months later, in April 1947, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, U Shwe Baw, replied that the Chinese government had “not availed themselves of the facilities relating to caretakers and administrative committees for the five cemeteries in Burma (including that at Mongyu)

103 For some of the guards, I have not found their names written in Chinese characters.

104 “T. V. Soon [T. V. Soong] to British Embassy [Chongqing],” August 1, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

105 “Draft correspondence from Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD and British Embassy [Nanjing],” September 5, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

106 “Government of Burma to Foreign Office,” March 11, 1946, BL IOR M/4/3072.

107 “British Embassy [Nanjing] to Chinese MFA,” April 28, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

offered by the Government of Burma.”¹⁰⁸ U Shwe Baw stressed that no caretakers had been appointed for the Chinese war dead cemetery at Mongyu and that there were traces of minor damage to the cemetery, namely, the removal of about twenty bricks. No suspect was identified. However, the cemetery was open to the public and no complaints made by anyone of having been stopped, molested or interfered with in any manner when visiting the cemetery had been filed.¹⁰⁹ Despite the reassurance from the Government of Burma, the Mongyu cemetery suffered from disorganization and damage in 1947. A report from the Chinese military in Burma to the United Quartermasters office of the Chinese Army indicated that the graves had not been renovated in a long time and many had simply collapsed. Since the rainy season had just began, the condition of these graves worsened. Even though the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon encouraged local overseas Chinese organizations to help with the repair, the results were insufficient.¹¹⁰

The United Quartermasters urged the MFA to promptly renovate the cemeteries and to pay each caretaker a minimum salary of 170 rupees a month.¹¹¹ After receiving another complaint from Chinese Consulate in Rangoon that the twelve caretakers were having financial hardships, the MFA approved the amount.¹¹² They would receive salary for the period of January to July 1947, totaling 14,280 rupees, to be sent through the Central Bank (*Zhongyang yinhang*).¹¹³ However, reports from the local Overseas Chinese Support Group in 1947 confirmed that the three caretakers at Mongyu had already left the cemetery for the area of Wanting (*Wanting* 畹町) and Muse (*Mujie* 木姐) along the Sino-Burmese border due to financial difficulties.¹¹⁴

108 “U Shwe Baw, Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs of Government of Burma to British Embassy [Nanjing],” April 4, 1947, BL IOR M/4/3072.

109 “U Shwe Baw, Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs of Government of Burma to British Embassy [Nanjing],” April 4, 1947, BL IOR M/4/3072.

110 “Draft reply from Chinese MFA to earlier reports from Chinese United Quartermasters’ Supreme Command (*Lianhe qinwu zongsiling bu* 聯合勤務總司令部) and Chinese General Consulate [Rangoon],” April 11, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

111 “Draft reply from Chinese MFA to Chinese United Quartermasters report dated July 17,” July 24, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010. Burma used Indian rupees until becoming independent in 1948.

112 “Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA,” May 30, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

113 “Draft reply from Chinese MFA to Chinese Consulate [Rangoon], c/o Chinese MOD and Chinese Ministry of the Interior,” August 15, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

114 “Chinese United Quartermasters Supreme Command to Chinese MFA,” May 11, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

6 Weapons of Tension: Raids, Thefts, and Murders in Namhkam and Myitkyina

All the guards at Namhkam and Myitkyina cemeteries were armed, which led to a series of troubles. The two guards at the Namhkam cemetery were Corporal Wang Shaowu 王少武, a 27-year-old Sichuanese, and lance corporal Li Guosen 李國森, a 25-year-old Hunanese. Wang had a rifle and sixty rounds of ammunition. Li had a rifle and 160 rounds. Both were former servicemen of the 30th Division and were married. The Myitkyina cemetery had three guards, all of whom were bachelors. Liu Long 劉龍, a 25-year-old Hunanese and sergeant of the 4th Company, 113th Regiment, 38th Division, had a registered rifle and twenty rounds. Zhou Chaogui 周朝貴, a 30-year-old Sichuanese and lance corporal of the Mortar Company of the 112th Regiment, 38th Division, carried a 1.38-caliber rifle and twenty rounds. Deng Minghui 鄧明輝, a 33-year-old Cantonese and private first class of the 5th Company, 89th Regiment, 30th Division, carried a registered rifle and twenty rounds. All these rifles were American issued.¹¹⁵ The possession of arms by Chinese military men in Myitkyina and Namhkam gave rise to serious problems. The Governor of Burma informed the Foreign Office that he adamantly disapproved the possession of arms because weapons caused tension between the Chinese and local communities, who were already not getting along.¹¹⁶

The Chinese MFA received a troublesome report from the Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group by way of the New First Army Command and the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon. On July 10, 1946, the local authority of the Shweli Valley confiscated two rifles from two guards at the Namhkam cemetery. On July 16, the weapons of the New First Army's assigned guards at the Myitkyina cemetery were seized by the local police force without advance notice. From the report, it appeared that the guards at these cemeteries had hoarded more weapons than what had been reported and registered. Besides the three American rifles with proper registration numbers, the guards had concealed four Japanese-style rifles with 180 bullets and three American-style grenades. Accused of violating the law, one of the guards, Liu Long, was thrown into jail with no means of being released. On July 18, several Tommy guns were confiscated from the Myitkyina cemetery. Other guards at Myitkyina, Zhou Chaogui

115 "T. V. Soon [T. V. Soong] to British Embassy [Chongqing]," August 1, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

116 "Foreign Office [London] to Government of Burma, addressing previous report by Government of Burma," November 20, 1945, BL IOR M/4/3072.

and Deng Minghui, had already left the cemetery to open an inn. The cemetery in Myitkyina was then left unattended.¹¹⁷

Prior to these arrests, the Chinese military's presence in Burma had been negatively perceived due to a number of incidents caused by deserters. In January 1946, a gang of Chinese deserters reportedly murdered a rice mill owner and his servants.¹¹⁸ The leader of the newly formed Pacific Ocean Flying Tigers Gang was captured in Myitkyina and imprisoned in Myingyan, a place in central Burma, in June 1946. He then escaped to Rangoon.¹¹⁹ A gang of two dozen Chinese deserters opened fire at civilians on the Myitkyina-Bhamo Road. In November 1946, the Government of Burma captured 217 Chinese deserters and criminals and sent them on a boat to Shanghai.¹²⁰ In 1947, Reuter reported that the Burmese police were holding about 2,000 Chinese deserters.¹²¹ These were just a few cases out of many reported to the Government of Burma. In the eyes of the Burmese authorities, Chinese soldiers became prime suspects in crimes. With such an ill reputation, the Chinese veterans posted as cemetery guards faced plenty of local hostility.

Aware of such hostility, the Nationalists approached the issue diplomatically but firmly. In July 1947, the Consul General for China, Xu Shaochang 許紹昌 (1913-1999), sent a formal complaint to U Shwe Baw, Secretary of Burma's Department of Foreign Affairs, demanding the return of the three rifles and ammunition to the guards at the Myitkyina cemetery. Xu added that in the event the Government of Burma deemed it inappropriate for these guards to be armed, the confiscated weapons should be handed over to the Chinese government.¹²² Nevertheless, the Chinese government found it increasingly difficult to "tele-manage" the cemeteries and guards. In September 1947, the Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group in Namhkam reported that the families of the two cemetery guards, Li Guosen and Wang Shaowu, at the Namhkam Cemetery lacked means of living. Wang had already asked the Aid Group to help relocate his family to the Huaxia 華夏 Elementary School. An overseas Chinese named Tan Yuzhi 譚裕之 and his wife moved to the cemetery

117 "Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," September 16, 1946, MFA AH 020-011103-0010. This report on disturbance in Burma was also sent to the Chinese MOD. "Draft correspondence from Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD," November 13, 1946, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

118 "Secret telegram from Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma," February 12, 1946, BL IOR M/4/2942.

119 "Weekly Intelligence no. 26," June 29, 1946, BL IOR M/4/2942.

120 "Weekly Intelligence no. 45," July 13, 1946, BL IOR M/4/2942.

121 "Report from Reuter, Rangoon," July 4, 1947, BL IOR M/4/2942.

122 "Shao-Chang Hsu [Xu Shaochang] to U Shwe Baw c/o Home Department," July 10, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

in Wang's place. In the early morning of August 20, Wang Shaowu rushed to the Mutual Aid Group office with the horrific news that two cemetery guards, Li and Tan, and their wives had been viciously murdered. The Mutual Aid Group chairman and some members brought the matter to the local police. When the police arrived at the scene, they found that the two guards had been stabbed while their legs and arms had been restrained. Their wives were found dead in the bedrooms.¹²³ Further examination revealed that Li Guosen died from four cuts on his neck, chest, and arms. His wife expired due to six cuts on her head, three on the back, and six more all over her body. Tan Yuzhi's head was severed from his body and his face was slashed two times. His wife suffered five cuts on the head and five more on her neck, hands, and thigh. Each couple had one son. The children appeared to be unharmed.¹²⁴ That the two women suffered from significantly more wounds than their husbands and their faces were wrecked beyond recognition indicated this case was not a simple robbery.

Upon receiving the report from the Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group, the Chinese Consul General, Xu Shaochang, rushed the issue to both the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Frontier Areas Administration of the Government of Burma. Xu maintained that the unfortunate incident was due to the illegitimate confiscation of weapons. The Namhkam guards could have defended themselves had they been allowed to keep their U.S.-issued rifles. Xu asked the Burmese authorities to give immediate attention to the crime, return the seized weapons to the cemetery guards in Namhkam and other places, and compensate the families of the victims.¹²⁵

Around the same time as the slaughter of the Namhkam caretakers, news emerged about Liu Long, the guard from the cemetery in Myitkyina who had been arrested back in 1946. The Chinese Army Training Headquarters forwarded a report from General Sun Liren, who was in charge of the compensation committee for fallen and wounded soldiers of the New First Army, to the Chinese MFA.¹²⁶ The report contained Liu Long's petition. In early January 1948, Liu Long filed a report about his arrest one and a half years earlier, saying that the Burmese local authorities had seized the war spoils and other practical items from the cemetery in Myitkyina. Liu Long then went to court to inquire

123 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," September 8, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

124 "Consul General for China, Shao-Chang Hsu [Xu Shaochang], to Government of Burma's Department of Foreign Affairs," September 4, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

125 "Consul General for China, Shao-Chang Hsu [Xu Shaochang], to Government of Burma's Department of Foreign Affairs," September 4, 1947, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

126 Sun petitioned for the commemoration of the fallen Chinese soldiers in Burma. "Sun Liren to National Government," November 26, 1945, GMZF AH 001-036000-0142, file 50008401.

about the confiscation. He was not given an explanation but was thrown in jail for over forty days. Upon release, Liu pleaded with the Chinese Embassy to intervene, but to no avail. Liu then sought help through the Chinese military. Sun Liren added that the matter concerning fallen Chinese soldiers and veterans serving as cemetery guards was related to the “national dignity” (*guojia timian* 國家體面). It had to be promptly addressed.¹²⁷

In response to these allegations from the Chinese Embassy, the Burmese authorities pointed out that because the murders in Namhkam were committed with such brutality and there was no evidence of property being taken from the victims’ homes, these killings must have been personal vendettas within the Chinese community. The Burmese Minister of Foreign Affairs added that “[the] deceased had no quarrel with anyone in this state, and the local officers are of the opinion that the assailants came from the China side of the frontier.”¹²⁸ As the case involved Chinese victims and assailants, Burma suggested that the Chinese authorities conduct their own investigation. The Burmese authorities underlined that “90 percent of the serious crime in the Northern Shan States occur in the area adjacent to the Chinese border, and that the persons responsible either originate from China or take refuge there after commission of the crime.”¹²⁹ As for the weapons, local officials returned one of the rifles to Chinese caretakers and promised to send the rest to the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon. In addition, the Burmese MFA noted that the caretakers did not require weapons since the cemetery had “nothing except graves” to attract criminals.¹³⁰ From Liu Long’s abovementioned report, guards stored all sorts of weapons and war spoils at these cemeteries, turning them into attractive robbery targets.

In January 1948, Xu Shaochang, on behalf of the Chinese government, sent a memorandum to the Burmese MFA, refuting every claim made by the Burmese side. Xu argued that the crime took place within Burma’s territorial jurisdiction and thus “the responsibility of the Government of Burma in its failure to provide adequate protection for the victims who were specifically permitted by your government to remain in Burma to perform official duties on behalf of the Chinese Government could not be denied.”¹³¹ Xu refused to exonerate the Government of Burma, citing that Burma had no evidence of the crime being

127 “Chinese Army Training Headquarters to Chinese MFA, including a communication from Sun Liren,” February 3, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

128 “Union of Burma’s MFA to Chinese MFA,” January 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

129 “Union of Burma’s MFA to Chinese MFA,” January 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

130 “Union of Burma’s MFA to Chinese MFA,” January 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

131 “Shao-chang Hsu [Xu Shaochang] to J. Barrington, Esq.,” January 29, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0010.

committed by Chinese nationals and had waited five months before investigating the homicide case. Xu challenged Burma to find concrete data to support the claim that the Chinese side of the border was responsible for ninety percent of the crimes in the Northern Shan States. He also pointed out that all rifles of Chinese caretakers were properly documented and the information had been conveyed to the Burmese government in 1947. Xu advised that Burma follow the international convention with regard to military cemeteries and extend the common courtesy to the Chinese soldiers' cemeteries.¹³²

After the murders, the Chinese government continued to manage the cemeteries in Burma via the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon. The Chinese Embassy in Rangoon also reported that after the killings of the two caretakers' families, no one wanted to take their place because Namhkam was located far outside the nearest town. Huang Yongshun 黃永順, a caretaker from the cemetery in Mongyu, volunteered for the transfer. The Embassy thereupon sought approval from the MFA for Huang's new appointment.¹³³ While the Nationalist government already delegated the task of caring for the overseas war dead to local groups, it continued to serve as the source of authority.

Meanwhile, Sun Liren continued to appeal to the MFA via the Minister of Defense, General Bai Chongxi 白崇禧 (1893-1966), requesting that the Chinese government apply pressure on the Burmese government to protect the Chinese military cemeteries and their guards. Sun listed all the incidents—confiscations, arrests, damages, and murders—at the cemeteries in Burma. He insisted that the weapons should be returned to the caretakers for self-defense. Sun also requested that the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon establish a grave management committee. The committee would be constituted of authorized caretakers that were “Chinese government personnel legally living in Burma” (*hefa liu Mian zhi woguo zhengfu renyuan* 合法留緬之我國政府人員).¹³⁴ The Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1945 to 1948 was Wang Shijie, who, with a degree in law, probably understood the importance of setting legal terms among nation-states. However, the Chinese government's plan was not to establish a government office to manage these cemeteries, but to engage the local Chinese migrant communities.

132 “Shao-chang Hsu [Xu Shaochang] to J. Barrington, Esq.,” January 29, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0010.

133 “Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA,” March 13, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0010.

134 “Chinese MOD to Chinese MFA, including Sun Liren's report,” March 21, 1948, MFA AH 020-01103-0010.

7 Grave Keepers: Overseas Chinese Communities

In late 1948, the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon¹³⁵ proposed to the MFA the “General Guidelines to Maintain and Manage the National Army’s Cemeteries in Northern Burma” (*Mianbei Guojun gongmu xiuzheng guanli jihua dagang* 緬北國軍公墓修整管理計畫大綱). The proposal included setting up a committee headed by the Chinese Consul based in Lashio or by a Chinese MOD representative based in northern Burma. Membership would be picked from leaders of local Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Groups and approved by the Consul General. Each locality that had a Chinese soldiers’ cemetery would organize a sub-committee consisting of four members to be in charge of all management and maintenance businesses. Instead of Chinese army veterans, local Chinese communities would be in charge of maintaining these graves. These communities had been contributing a great deal to the maintenance of the five cemeteries in Burma and were able to conduct businesses efficiently and responsibly.¹³⁶

The Chinese Embassy in Burma emphasized that the current arrangement at these cemeteries was problematic because of the issues with caretakers. Filling the vacancies with accountable people was difficult due to low pay and remote locations. Some caretakers were criminals while others were unmanageable. Some even posed financial burdens on local Chinese communities. The MOD sent the salaries to the Consulate to distribute to the caretakers. Because they received lump sums, the caretakers quickly squandered their earnings on prostitution and gambling. Zhou Bin, a veteran and guard at the cemetery in Bhamo, was arrested for dealing in opium and sentenced to imprisonment. Such cases damaged the “national prestige.” Local overseas Chinese groups found it difficult to supervise these guards. The Chinese Consulate recommended ordering all the cemetery caretakers, except those who had settled down with families in Burma, to return to China. Before dismissing the veterans, the Chinese Consulate asked the MOD to pay eleven caretakers’ salaries for 1948, which amounted to 2,240 rupees. The number of caretakers could be reduced to one Chinese migrant per cemetery and the salary could be decreased from 170 rupees to about 100-120 rupees. Even with the lower salary, new migrants to the area in need of shelter would be willing to set up thatched cottages at the cemeteries and take up custodial jobs. Given their circumstances, they would even accept less pay. The new plan would cost the MOD only

135 In 1948, there were two Chinese Consulates in Burma, one in Rangoon and the other in Lashio.

136 “Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA,” September 25, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

1,000-1,200 rupees each year. The extra money could go toward repairing the graves.¹³⁷

The Chinese Minister of Defense, Xu Yongchang 徐永昌 (1885-1959), agreed with all the points proposed by the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon. Consulate representatives and local Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Groups were allowed to form cemetery management committees and to replace veterans with civilians as caretakers. The Consulates would give the original caretakers their back pay and encourage them to disband. They could either remain in Burma or return to China. Moreover, the Chinese MOD ordered the Chinese Consulates and local overseas Chinese communities via the Chinese MFA to organize the spring and autumn sacrifices on March 29 and September 3.¹³⁸

In November 1948, the Chinese Embassy also forwarded a number of complaints from the caretakers in Bhamo and Lashio, who had not received salaries for the first half of 1948.¹³⁹ The Chinese MOD replied that it would pay the caretakers' allowances; however, there was an unavoidable delay due to the Executive Yuan having to issue payment in foreign currencies.¹⁴⁰ The Chinese MFA notified Rangoon that the United Quartermasters would take care of the back pay.¹⁴¹ The pay was half a year late at this point. In March 1949, the Chinese Consulate in Burma once again appealed to the United Quartermasters by way of the Chinese MFA that the salaries for the second half of 1948 had not been received.¹⁴²

137 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," September 25, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

138 "Chinese MOD to Chinese MFA," November 27, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011. Spring sacrifice is traditionally organized on the Clear and Bright Festival (*Qingming jie* 清明節), the first day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. Autumn sacrifice is traditionally organized on the Ghost Festival (*Zhongyuan jie* 中元節, or *Yulan jie* 盂蘭節), the fifteenth day of the seventh month. During these occasions, offerings were made to the dead at gravesites and household altars. Because these dates are not fixed in the solar calendar, the government could designate anniversaries of important events in the history of the republic to be the dates of the spring and autumn sacrifices. March 29 is the lunar anniversary of the 1911 Yellow Flower Hill (*Huanghuagang* 黃花崗) uprising in Guangzhou. September 3, the day after the Japanese surrender on the USS *Missouri*, became the victory day of the Anti-Japanese War (*Kang-Ri zhanzheng shengli jinianri* 抗日戰爭勝利紀念日) in China.

139 "Two reports from Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA, including petitions from Zhou Bin, Huang Qianfeng, and Yang Jidong [Bhamo] and from Hu Weihua [Lashio]," November 17, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

140 "Chinese MOD to Chinese MFA," December 8, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

141 "Chinese MFA to Chinese Consulate [Rangoon]," December 19, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

142 "Chinese Consulate [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," March 16, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

Without regular payment from the Nationalist government, the local Chinese communities in Burma became the main caretaker of these military cemeteries. In November 1948, three guards at the cemetery in Myitkyina, Liu Long, Zhou Chaogui, and Deng Minggui, informed the Chinese Army Training Headquarters that the Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Group leaders, Pan Fuguan 潘福官 and Chen Mengmin 陳夢民, had mandated that every new member should pay five rupees as the initiation fee. The collected fund would be used to maintain the cemetery.¹⁴³ The plot thickened. In August 1949, the Chinese Army Training Headquarters reported that the money raised for repairing the cemetery, about 300 rupees, had been stolen by Chen Mengmin.¹⁴⁴ Around the same time, Liu Long was again arrested by the Myitkyina police as a suspect after a Burmese chauffeur named Maung Aung was found dead near the cemetery.¹⁴⁵

The United Quartermasters suggested setting June 30, 1949, as the last date of engagement for the original caretakers. They would receive salaries for their duty from July 1948 to June 1949, and be disbanded.¹⁴⁶ The Chinese Embassy offered to issue passports for the caretakers who wished to return to China and ordered those who wished to stay in Burma to seek alien registration.¹⁴⁷ A receipt showed that 17,280 rupees was transferred to the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon and 5,340 rupees to the Chinese Consulate in New Delhi via the Bank of China, Calcutta.¹⁴⁸ The Chinese MFA also agreed with the Consulate's request to transfer the salary of Li Guosen, the guard that had been murdered in 1947, to his son.¹⁴⁹ Since no information about his son could be gathered, Li's back pay of 4,216 rupees was divided among other caretakers.¹⁵⁰

143 "Chinese Army Training Headquarters to Chinese MFA," December 1, 1948, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

144 "Draft reply from Chinese MFA," September 29, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

145 "Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," August 20, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

146 "Chinese United Quartermasters to Chinese MFA," April 13, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

147 "Chinese Embassy in [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," April 17, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

148 "Canton Branch of Central Bank of China to Chinese MFA [Canton]," May 17, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

149 "Chinese MFA to Chinese Embassy [Rangoon]," June 14, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011. The Chinese MOD wanted to transfer Li Guosen's salary to his relatives in China. However, the Chinese Embassy reported that Li Guosen had a son who was taken in by someone in the Namhkam overseas Chinese community, so a portion of Li's salary should be given to Li's son if he was still in the area. If no relative could be identified, the money should be given to the other caretakers. "Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," July 6, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

150 "Chinese Embassy [Rangoon] to Chinese MFA," November 14, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

By late 1949, all veterans had left except for Hu Weihua at the cemetery in Lashio where the new management had not been set up.¹⁵¹ Each of the five cemeteries had one caretaker, who was paid 120 rupees per month. With the Overseas Chinese Mutual Aid Groups taking over the cemeteries, these cemeteries appeared to be properly maintained after the Nationalists' retreat to Taiwan. The Chinese MFA also continued to negotiate with the Burmese government to acquire permanent ownership of the land where the cemeteries were situated.¹⁵² Even when the Nationalist government was on the run, it tried to supervise the posthumous care of the war dead.¹⁵³ The war dead were looked after by local communities. China's fallen expeditionary soldiers were honored neither internationally nor nationally, but locally. The cooperation between the central government and local communities in honoring the war dead characterized the nature of war commemoration in China.

8 War Crime Victims in Rabaul

During World War II, a few thousand Chinese soldiers and civilians were captured and sent to Rabaul by the Japanese. Stories about them came to light at the end of the war. During war crimes trials organized by the Australian government, details about these imprisoned Chinese came to light. Nine Japanese servicemen were convicted of the mass murder of 30 Chinese at Rabaul. According to testimony by a Chinese Army officer, he "witnessed the killings of 30 Chinese by two Japanese and seven Formosans [Taiwanese]. The Chinese were taken from their sick beds, marched to newly dug mass graves, and bashed and beaten, into the W holes. When they refused to enter them, they were shot."¹⁵⁴ In another trial, Sergeant Tozaburo Matsushima, Private Harimoto Ayizama and seven Japanese civilians at Rabaul were convicted of murdering twenty-four Chinese war prisoners by "pushing them into a hole and mowing them down with bullets" on March 3, 1943. Multiple charges related to the murders of 46 other Chinese war prisoners on different occasions were filed at the same trial.¹⁵⁵ At the trial of Major-General Akira Hirota in 1947, Chinese soldiers testified that "parties of their sick compatriots were forced

151 "Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD," December 19, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

152 "Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD," December 19, 1949, MFA AH 020-011103-0011.

153 The Communist forces chased the Nationalist government out of Nanjing in late April 1949. The Nationalists retreated to Guangzhou until mid-October, and to Chongqing and Chengdu until early December 1949 when they made it to Taiwan.

154 "Ten Sentenced to Death," *Cairns Post*, April 17, 1946, 1.

155 "Murder of Chinese," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 19, 1947, 5.

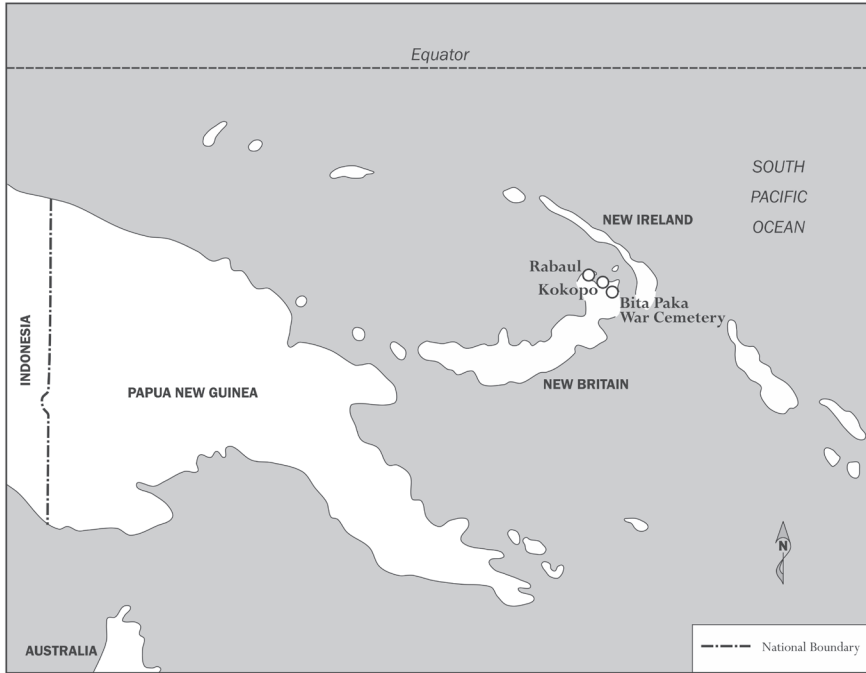


FIGURE 3 Rabaul
MAP BY DEBBIE NEWELL

to dig large pits, and were then pushed into the pits and shot dead.”¹⁵⁶ A war correspondent in Rabaul reported that 1,504 Chinese “[h]eroes of Nanking in 1937 and of the crack 88th Division which made a suicide stand at Shanghai by devious ways were brought to Rabaul—together with other Chinese captured at Malaya.”¹⁵⁷ Another war correspondent reported that a Japanese doctor allegedly injected poison into a Chinese private who had been driven insane by beating and starvation. Another six soldiers who fell ill after their sea journey from Shanghai were swiftly executed on arrival.¹⁵⁸

By the end of World War II, about half of 1,504 Chinese soldiers drafted to Rabaul died from ill-treatment and suicide. Nonetheless, according to a 1945 newspaper article, “[p]roud, defiant, the Chinese never yielded to the

156 “Japs Made Chinese Dig Own Graves Allegations at Rabaul,” *The Argus*, March 20, 1947, 5.

157 M. C. Warren, “Chinese ‘Lost Army’ Found,” *The Daily News*, September 18, 1945, 7.

158 Cyril Burley, “Chinese Shed Inscrutability as They Identify Rabaul Japs,” *The Daily News*, December 4, 1945, 4.

Japanese. They stoically awaited the day of their release.”¹⁵⁹ An archival photograph shows three liberated soldiers, “of the famous Chinese 88 Division which fought a renowned stand in Shanghai for the French concession.”¹⁶⁰ The soldiers were dressed in neat uniforms and one carried the Republic of China’s national flag.

At the same time as the World War II crimes trials, the Australian government sought to settle the fate of the Chinese prisoners. After the Japanese surrender, over 800 Chinese forced laborers in Rabaul were sent back to their native places in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and northern China. The Australian government and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) arranged the repatriation.¹⁶¹ As for the military dead, Chinese soldiers built a monument in 1945 to commemorate their dead comrades. The photograph below shows two rather elaborate graves and tombstones of an army sergeant and an infantry captain.



FIGURE 4 The 1945 Chinese cemetery’s memorial monument in Rabaul
COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

159 M. C. Warren, “Chinese ‘Lost Army’ Found,” *The Daily News*, September 18, 1945, 7.

160 AWMC, Collection Item 096905, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C73976> (accessed April 10, 2018).

161 “Repatriation of Chinese from Rabaul,” *The North-China Daily News*, November 10, 1946, 3.

More commemorative efforts took place in 1946. By March 16, 1946, out of the 653 Chinese captives, both military and civilian, who had died under the Japanese occupation, 259 were already reinterred in marked graves in the Chinese cemetery in Rabaul.¹⁶² The cemetery also contained “vacant lots of bodies yet to be found in the hills.”¹⁶³ Caretakers lived in modest tents within the cemetery compound; members of the Chinese community assisted with maintenance of the cemetery.¹⁶⁴ A memorial service was organized with the attendance of representatives of the Australian army, Chinese army, and Chinese community.¹⁶⁵ Food, candles, banners, and flower wreaths were laid at the memorial monument, which bears the inscription “Memorial to the Deceased Chinese Cantonese People” (*Zhongguo Guangdong minzhong siwang jinianbei* 中國廣東民眾死亡紀念碑).¹⁶⁶

In 1946, remains of 377 Chinese soldiers were exhumed from various parts of Rabaul and reburied in the Rabaul War Cemetery. In fact, they were reburied in a separate lot next to the Bita Paka War Cemetery where Allied servicemen were buried. That Chinese prisoners of war were buried separately reflected the racial segregation in life and death in New Guinea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁶⁷ According to the records from the Australian National Archives, each of the 377 Chinese soldiers was identified by his information card. The cards contain names, ranks, original burial places, new burial places, and the dates of reburial. All except for three were identified. However, none except for one soldier, a Wong Wing Sang, had a known date of death in 1944. The remains were reburied on four occasions, March 27, April 12, May 8, and October 25 in 1946. One private, a Wong Tse Shin, died in October 1947 and was reburied in November 1947.¹⁶⁸

While the reburials were taking place, the Australian Legation notified that Chinese MFA about the approximately 400 Chinese prisoners of war, who had been transported to Rabaul from “the battlefields of China” and had died

162 AWMC, Collection Item 099926, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C206653> (accessed April 10, 2018).

163 AWMC, Collection Item 099927, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C206654> (accessed April 10, 2018).

164 AWMC, Collection Item 099928, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C206655> (accessed April 10, 2018).

165 AWMC, Collection Item 099922, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/099922/> (accessed May 10, 2017).

166 AWMC, Collection Item 099921, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/099921/> (accessed May 10, 2017).

167 Cahill 1996, 725.

168 “Rabaul War Cemetery Chinese Troops,” 1946, NAA A8234 30A.

before the Japanese capitulated. The Australian War Graves Services (under the IWGC), in consultation with the senior Chinese military officer in the area, had located the graves of these deceased Chinese servicemen and transferred them to a war cemetery adjacent to the British Empire War Cemetery at Bita Paka. The Australian Army undertook the maintenance of the cemetery and the markings of the graves. When the responsibility for maintenance was transferred from the Army to the IWGC, the future maintenance of the Chinese cemetery was in question. While “the Charter of the IWGC does not permit expenditure of Commission funds on the maintenance of graves of other than British Empire dead ... the Commission, on the request of the Chinese Government, might undertake the maintenance of the Chinese War Cemetery at Bita Paka, on a basis of repayment of all costs incurred, including administrative charges.”¹⁶⁹

Upon receiving the telegram in April 1947, the Chinese MFA swiftly translated and forwarded it to the MOD.¹⁷⁰ Informed by the MOD, the United Quartermasters asked the Chinese Consulate in Australia to investigate the situation in Rabaul.¹⁷¹ The line of communication was down for the remainder of 1947 and was sporadic throughout 1948 as the Nationalist-Communist conflict intensified. The Australian Legation sent another reminder to the Chinese MFA in early January 1948.¹⁷² The Chinese government delayed their reply for months in order to discuss whether these graves should be converted into a permanent cemetery.¹⁷³ In June 1948, the Chinese Embassy in Australia finally cabled the Chinese MFA proposing to have the bodies of 377 Chinese soldiers in the Rabaul War Cemetery exhumed, cremated, and transported back to China. The total cost including exhuming, encoffining, and transporting the ashes to Hong Kong amounted to 3,468 Australian dollars.¹⁷⁴ The plan fell through. As of March 1949, the Australian government was still wondering when it would be informed by the Nationalist government regarding the Chinese graves in Rabaul.¹⁷⁵ The graves however had been maintained by Chinese migrants, who were becoming a major economic force in Rabaul.¹⁷⁶ In addition, the Nationalist Party had a strong presence in the region; it had established a

169 “Australian Legation [Nanjing] to Chinese MFA,” March 29, 1947, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

170 “Draft of Chinese MFA to Chinese MOD,” April 2, 1947, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

171 “Chinese United Quartermasters to Chinese MFA,” April 1947, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

172 “Australian Legation [Nanjing] to Chinese MFA,” January 3, 1948, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

173 “Chinese Embassy [Canberra] to Chinese MFA,” January 14, 1948, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

174 “Chinese Embassy [Canberra] to Chinese MFA,” June 21, 1948, MFA AH 020-011503-0001.

175 “Australia’s Department of External Affairs to Australia’s Department of Interior,” March 29, 1949, NAA A1838 494/2/5.

176 “The Chinese Boom in Post-war Rabaul,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 4, 1950, 2.

branch in Rabaul in 1912.¹⁷⁷ In the 1930s, about 20 percent of the Chinese population in New Guinea were Nationalist Party members. The Nationalist Party branch ran the Chinese schools until the late 1950s.¹⁷⁸

As time passed, the Nationalist Chinese prisoners of war hailed as heroes in the immediate postwar began to lose their status. The presence of the Australian army in Rabaul and Australian migration policy in the 1950s oriented the Chinese community away from China.¹⁷⁹ In the 1960s-1970s, both partisan and ethnic components in Rabaul changed due to the rise of the PRC and more common intermarriages.¹⁸⁰ Within this context, in April 1964, W. J. Chalmers, Director General of the Australian War Graves Commission, stated in a meeting of the Kokopo Town Advisory Council that the Commission would “not do anything about the marking of the graves of about four hundred Chinese buried next to the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Bitapaka near Rabaul.”¹⁸¹ Chalmers claimed that the buried Chinese were not soldiers, but civilians, denying them proper recognition. Judging from the lack of reports on this matter, there was no uproar from the Chinese community in Rabaul, which might also have wanted to diminish their connection with the Nationalist past.

9 Conclusion: Afterlife of Memories

Nation-states, unlike their monarchical and imperial counterparts, care about the dead. In Europe, while the dead were primarily buried in the churchyard throughout the Middle Ages, the modern era witnessed the dominance of the cemetery as the final resting place.¹⁸² The unprecedented human cost of the American Civil War propelled the Union government to take care of the corporeal remains on the battlefields.¹⁸³ In China, families, clans, and local communities have been responsible for the dead. In the twentieth century, the Nationalist and Communist governments attempted to build cemeteries for their inner groups such as revolutionary martyrs, fallen combatants of the armed forces, and high-ranking bureaucrats. As Benedict Anderson notes, the

¹⁷⁷ Cahill 1996, 86.

¹⁷⁸ Wu 1991, 164.

¹⁷⁹ The Chinese community began to do business with Australians, send their children to school in Australia, and obtain Australian citizenship. Ichikawa 2006, 116-17.

¹⁸⁰ Wu 1991, 166, 175.

¹⁸¹ “Australia Refuses to Mark Chinese Graves,” *The Canberra Times*, April 4, 1964, 14.

¹⁸² Laqueur 2015.

¹⁸³ Faust 2008.

nation seizes, from the myriad deaths, “exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars, and holocausts” to construct a national biography.¹⁸⁴ What happens when a nation fails to care for its dead?

I have examined the emplacement and displacement of the Chinese war dead in the post-World War II era. The Nationalist government did not centralize and bureaucratize the care of dead bodies but relied on local communities where the bodies were located to care for them. Without a centralized office responsible for mortuary care, the Nationalists relied on informal institutions. Seeing the growth of the Chinese communities in India and Burma, the state entrusted them to care for the deceased expeditionary soldiers. Such an arrangement was not only a matter of logistical convenience, but also a way to strengthen the tie between the overseas Chinese community and the motherland.

The British administration and later the government of independent Burma were not mistaken about China's expansionist intentions in the border region, and thus were reluctant in allowing the Chinese, dead or alive, to remain in Burma. Financing was not the most critical issue as the construction and maintenance expenses for these graves were relatively low. Nonetheless, both the American and British authorities tried to displace the Chinese bodies from Burma and India by refusing to build the cemeteries and offering only temporary burials and maintenance plans. Comparably, the Australian authorities arranged for Chinese prisoners of war to be buried next to the British Empire War Cemetery in New Britain but left the maintenance task to the Nationalist government and local Chinese.

As for the Nationalists, emplacing the Chinese military dead within Indian and Burmese territories aided China's encroachment. With Chinese communities of both the dead and the living embedded along the Burma Road, China encroached upon its neighbors' sovereignty. The history of Chinese migrants in various towns in India and Burma influenced the fate of the Chinese war graves in a different way than in Rabaul. Because local Chinese who had migrated to the German and British New Guineas since the late nineteenth century became the main commercial force in the island, they played a major role in maintaining the World War II Chinese cemetery in Bita Paka.

As the rhetoric of China's being an Allied nation was insignificant in the decades-long hostilities between the Nationalist and Communist Chinas, both ignored the Chinese soldiers' graves in Burma, India, and Rabaul for sixty years. The year 2008 was transformative for both the PRC and the ROC with the Olympics being held for the first time in Beijing and the GMD winning both

184 Anderson 2006, 206.

the presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan. Since 2008, these long-forgotten war dead have been put to work by those on both sides of the Taiwan Strait who have been looking to craft new identities and find their new status in the twenty-first-century world order. “Whose dead?” has become the most important question for both governments with regard to the fallen soldiers.

The governments from both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been making tremendous efforts regarding the Chinese soldiers’ graves in foreign territories. In 2008, the Republic of China’s MOD set up a task force to investigate the fate of Nationalist soldiers in Rabaul. In 2009, it sent a mission to Papua New Guinea to identify and restore the gravesites of Nationalist soldiers.¹⁸⁵ The history of Chinese soldiers sent to Rabaul became even more complex when it was uncovered that Taiwanese colonials had been employed not only to interpret for the Japanese occupiers, but also to “control” the Nationalist Chinese prisoners of war.¹⁸⁶

In 2012, the ROC renovated Chinese graves in Ramgarh, India. The cemetery is about three miles outside Ramgarh. The main gate bears some resemblance to the gate of a temple, yet it was simply painted white and decorated with the ROC flag. There is a statue of Chiang Kai-shek in the courtyard.¹⁸⁷ According to the *China Post*, a Taiwanese expatriate in India had been maintaining the cemetery since 2006. In 2011, the ROC’s MOD approved a budget of a quarter million dollars for the renovation.¹⁸⁸ The photographs at the construction site show an attempt at creating a miniature version of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, with the road to the main building being lined with conifers. The top sports the Buddhist swastika. In 2018, the PRC Consul General in Calcutta expressed China’s intention to turn the cemetery at Ramgarh into a “global tourist destination,” to the dismay of the Taiwanese government which has been renovating and maintaining the site.¹⁸⁹

On July 7, 2013, the 76th anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the PRC organized an entering-the-shrine ceremony at Hunan’s Nanyue 南岳 Martyrs’ Shrine (*Zhonglie ci* 忠烈祠) for the 202 expeditionary soldiers who had died at the Battle of Yenangaung in April 1942.¹⁹⁰ The report by *China Daily* asserted that these Chinese soldiers sacrificed their lives to save 7,000 British soldiers and 500 prisoners in Burma. The photographs accompanying the article

185 Lan 2016, 209-10. Reports of the attempt can be found in Lu and Zeng, 2009.

186 Lan 2016, 208-19.

187 Ramgarh District Administration, “China Cemetery.”

188 “India Re-dedicates Cemetery to ROC Troops,” *The China Post*, December 10, 2011.

189 “China Wants Historical Cemetery at Ramgarh to be Turned into Global Tourist Spot,” *Times of India*, January 4, 2018.

190 For more information on this battle, see Wang 2018.



FIGURE 5 Spirit tablets at the National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine in Taipei
PHOTOGRAPH BY JUSTINA HWANG

show local people dressed in white—the funerary color in China—bowing to a sizable spirit tablet. Surviving comrades are also shown saluting the collective tablet.¹⁹¹

On August 27, 2014, an enshrinement ceremony was organized at the National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine (*Guomin geming zhonglie ci* 國民革命忠烈祠) in Taipei for the fallen Chinese soldiers of the Burma Campaign of 1942-1943. The spirit tablet (at the center of the photograph above) is to commemorate soldiers who died in the Burma Campaign during the Second World War. The wooden tablet carrying the collective souls of tens of thousands of Chinese expeditionary soldiers was transported by plane from Myanmar to Taiwan and placed on the altar among other spirit tablets by the ceremonial guards.

In 2015, the PRC sent representatives to Rabaul to perform a memorial service at the “Cemetery of War Veterans and Victims in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression” and to thank the local Chinese communities who have maintained the site. The PRC also maintained that there were at least four Communist soldiers among the Chinese prisoners of war that had died in

191 “Chinese Soldiers’ Shrine Home after 71 Years.”

Rabaul.¹⁹² It is crucial for the PRC to demonstrate its participation in the War of Resistance so as to gain both domestic and international legitimacy.

Both the PRC and the ROC have recently engaged in a war over sovereignty. As they are becoming less likely to pose armed threats to each other, they pick a new venue for their rivalry. Memories of past wars have become bones of contention. The forgotten war graves have become the sites of contestation. The spirits of these soldiers and civilians have become sources of sovereign power, allowing both the PRC and the ROC to re-envision their common history prior to their Civil War.

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 CMA Chongqing Municipal Archives, Chongqing.
 EY AH Executive Yuan Archives, Academia Historica, Taipei.
 GMZF AH Guomin zhengfu (National Government) Archives, Academia Historica, Taipei.
 MFA AH Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Academia Historica, Taipei.
 MFA AS Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Academia Sinica, Taipei.
 NAA National Archives of Australia, Canberra.
 NA FO Foreign Office Records, National Archives, London
 NARA National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (Maryland).
 OHC IWM Oral History Collection, Imperial War Museums, London.

192 "Chinese Delegation Held Memorial Service at the Cemetery of WWII Veterans and Victims in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea," *Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Papua New Guinea*, August 28, 2015.

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