British Journal for Military History

Volume 10, Issue 2, September 2024

Civilian Internment in India – Omissions and Exceptions

Anoma Pieris

ISSN: 2057-0422

Date of Publication: 13 September 2024

Citation: Anoma Pieris, 'Civilian Internment in India – Omissions and Exceptions', *British Journal for Military History*, 10.2 (2024), pp. 18-42.

www.bjmh.org.uk

The BJMH is produced with the support of Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Civilian Internment in India – Omissions and Exceptions

ANOMA PIERIS*
The University of Melbourne, Australia
Email: apieris@unimelb.edu.au

ABSTRACT
This essay explores civilian internment in India through the experiences of a small cast of characters unwittingly drawn into and implicated in the imperial conflict. They include a Thai artist and a Buddhist novice, incarcerated with Japanese internees at the Purana Qila, New Delhi, and later at Deoli; a German bhikkhu (Buddhist monk) sent to Dehradun camp from Ceylon, and an Italian bhikkhu who passed through numerous camps. Addressing themes of mobility, displacement and incarceration of individuals with natal or adopted Buddhist identity it uncovers neglected Asian realities and postcolonial sentiments pertaining to internment in British India.

At a 2007 Japan Foundation exhibition on *Cubism in Asia*, the author noted in the catalogue a remarkable drawing by the esteemed Thai artist Fua Haribhitak (Figure 1).[1] Entitled, The Japanese internment camp at Purana Qila and Deoli (1943-45), the painting conveyed, through angular geometries – familiarised by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque during the early twentieth century – the congestion, ennui and pathos of Japanese internment in India. An article in *Granta* magazine entitled 'Ghost in a Kimono' featured this and a subsequent version of the image that Fua had painted after the war.[2] The original painting, a graphite sketch on paper is regarded as Thailand's first cubist work by the celebrated, Italian-trained modernist. A subsequent tempera-on-paper painting by Fua, executed after the war, accentuates the composition's poignancy (Figure 2).

---

*Dr Anoma Pieris is a Professor of Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne, Australia.
DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v10i2.1812
[1]Sutee Kunavichayanont, 'La Thailande: du cubism à l'abstraction, *Cubism: l'autre rive – Résonances en Asie*, 16 May – 7 July (Paris: Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris, 2007), p. 195.
[2]Raghu Karnad, 'The Ghost in a Kimono', *Granta* 130 (2015), pp. 148-166.

Figure 1. Fua Haribhitak, Sketch of the Japanese internees at Purana Qila.[3]

A crowd of anonymous figures, many of them women in brightly coloured kimonos carrying or holding onto children, huddle together in an enclosed space. Their bodies curl inward as if warding off some unseen evil, the repetitive geometric patterns amplifying their distress. The background silhouette is of Humayun's Gate at Delhi's Old Fort.

While his depiction suggested the concentration of a specific national and cultural group, Fua's Thai identity, and his presence in the camp, as well as his sympathetic rendering of the civilians' plight raise multiple unasked questions regarding the demographic composition and social experience of internment India.

[3]Reproduced with permission from Sirinthorn Haribhitak, Courtesy Tira Vanichtheeranont. Graphite on paper.

Figure 2. Fua Haribhitak, Japanese Internment Camp, Purana Qila, Delhi, India, 1945.[4]

Focusing mainly on biographical materials recounting intimate wartime experiences, this essay questions the categorisation of 'enemy' internees as 'Germans', 'Italians' and 'Japanese' in anglophone military histories of the Second World War. These narrow military classifications applicable to prisoners of war (POWs) mask the civilian population's heterogeneity. This tendency is compounded by the naturalisation of post-war national boundaries in area studies or the privileging of imperial perspectives in military histories. Attention to diasporic community stories have, despite humanising and differentiating national narratives, reproduced and reinforced these military categorisations. By doing so, they absorb other intersectional identities with potentially different insights. For instance, the nominal roll of 'German' internees and parolees in India, in July 1943 at Dehradun, Deoli, Satara and Purandhar included many European nationals from Africa and Asia of various persuasions, including

[4]Collection of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Thailand's Ministry of Culture. Reproduced with the agreement of Sirinthorn Haribhitak and permission from Mr Kowit Pakamart, Director General, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture. Tempera on paper, 26.5 x 37.5 cm.

missionaries.[5] The list of 'Japanese' interned in India likewise included one Korean, several Chinese, and a number of Taiwanese. Women of other nationalities accompanying their Japanese husbands included a Thai, a Chinese and a Russian woman, as well as a couple of Chinese servants, perhaps accompanying their employers. Internee occupations ranged from Okinawan fishermen to bank and company executives, plantation owners, professionals, tradesmen, small business owners and domestic workers – occupations indicative of a society that had industrialised half a century earlier.[6] Taiwanese actors and an actress, captured in Singapore and Malaya, point to the incarceration, possibly, of touring operatic troupes.[7]

Conversely, in International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) correspondence on repatriation in 1946, internee classifications appear erratic; categorised by nationality, colour and political affinity with state of health as a variable.[8] The 4710 'Japanese' are divided into POWs and civilian internees differentiated by gender and whether adult or child under five main categories:

> [a] 268 Non-Japanese – Internees from Deoli and POWs from Bikaner – including Siamese, Formosans and Koreans and including chronically sick persons among them;
> [b] 109 Chronic Sick – Internees from Deoli and POWs from the British Indian Military Hospital (IMH) Delhi and Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta;
> [c] 1,592 Whites – Internees from Deoli and POWs from Bikaner – the latter including army and navy officers, other ranks, and civilians attached to the military;
> [d] 2,671 Blacks – Internees from Deoli and POWs from Quetta;

---

[5]British Library (hereinafter BL) IOR L/PJ/8/31, Coll.101/10AA, Nominal Roll of Internees and Paroles in India, July 1943. Bulgarians, Belgians, Hungarians, Austrians, Danes, Rumanians, those from Straits Settlements, the Middle East, Burma, India, Ceylon, Hong Kong; Italians from North Africa, Somali-land, Aden, Eretria, and India.
[6]Christine de Matos and Rowena Ward, 'Forgotten forced migrants of war: civilian internment of Japanese in British India, 1941-6', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 56, 4 (2021), pp. 1102-1125, p. 1102.
[7]Shu-ming Chun, *Taiwan Gazette*, 25 May 2021, 'Captured by War, Lost Before Liberation: Taiwanese in World War II Internment Camps,' https://www.taiwangazette.org/news/2021/5/11/captured-by-war-lost-before-liberation-taiwanese-in-world-war-ii-internment-camps. Accessed 22 July 2024.
[8]ICRC Archives, Geneva, D AO INDE1-23, General correspondence concerning the Japanese prisoners of war and civilian internees in British India, 30 March 1942-14 September 1946.

> [e] 70 Collaborators also identified as officers, other ranks and civilians from General Staff Intelligence GSI(n) the IMH Delhi and Bikaner camp.[9]

The collaborators were evidently removed from the main body of prisoners/internees after which non-Japanese, 'whites' and 'blacks' were grouped. While Jewish internees and Christian/Roman Catholic missionaries were segregated in some internment camps, *bikkhus* (Buddhist monks) or Hindu *swamis* (ascetics) were not differentiated in this way. The 'Japanese' internees who presumably followed Shinto or Buddhist practices included eleven priests, monks and novices: six Japanese, one Formosan and four Thais. Although not this article's focus, there is evidence of the internment of four Nipponzan-Myōhōji monks and another connected to the Mahatma Gandhi ashram at Wardha.[10] Though inconclusive, at least seven Buddhist monks have been identified among the European internees at Deoli and Dehra Dun.

Focusing primarily on the non-Japanese Buddhists, this essay's cast of marginal characters offer unique perspectives on internment in India. Two individuals, the *samanera* (Buddhist novice) Karuna Kusalasaya and artist Fua Haribhitak, were studying at Visva Bharati University at Santiniketan, and following the Japanese invasion of Thailand and Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsonkhram's Alliance Pact with Japan (21 December 1941), they were arrested and interned at Delhi's Purana Qila. The two internees were later moved to Deoli Internment Camp in Rajasthan. Fua's artworks and Kusalasaya's 1991 memoir, *Life Without a Choice*, uncover formative prewar inter-Asian networks centred in India. The experiences of interned European *bikkhus* bring focus to India's immediate neighbours.[11] A German *bikkhu* transported to India from Ceylon, Ñānatiloka Thera (Anton Gueth) and an Italian-American *bikkhu* captured in Burma, Lokanatha (Salvatore Cioffi) offer fascinating if unorthodox perspectives on Premnagar and other Indian internment camps.[12] Unlike the more complex alliances of German- and Italian- Christian and Roman Catholic missionaries and priests, studied by Paul Von Tucher, private accounts of these several individuals who identify as

[9]Ibid.

[10]Thomas Weber and Akira Hayashi, 'Mahatma Gandhi: The Japanese Connection', https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/mahatma-gandhi-the-japanese-connection.html. Accessed 22 July 2024 - with reference to Takashi Kaite, 'An Account of War Internment in India,' *Doumei Graph*, 1943, vol.11, no.1, pp. 65-69 p.66.

[11]Karuna Kusalasaya, *Life Without a Choice* (Bangkok: Sathirakoses-Nagradipa Foundation, 1991).

[12]Ñānatusita and Helmuth Hecker eds. *The Life of Ñānatiloka Thera: A Western Buddhist Pioneer* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2008); Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', pp. 291-294. R.L. Soni, 'The Venerable Lokanatha', *The Mahabodhi Journal*, 35, 7-8 (July-August 1966), pp. 177-179.

Buddhists reveal how incipient processes of decolonisation in the wider colonial context percolated into the camps.[13]

The Wider Context for Civilian Internment in India

Some 2.5 million Indian troops fought in the British Indian Army in North Africa, Europe, and Asia, including the crucial Burma campaign.[14] Over 50,000 were captured.[15] Indian POWs endured among the worst physical conditions and treatment under the Japanese Imperial Army. Conversely, throughout the Second World War, India was a hotbed of anti-British resistance. Following the *Quit India* resolution passed in August 1942, Indian Congress leaders were jailed for non-cooperation, and for the war's duration, their politics influencing Southeast Asia's Indian diaspora and Indian troops caught up in the 1941/2 fighting in Malaya and Singapore. The pro-Japanese Indian National Army (INA) under Subash Chandra Bose was formed in Singapore after the British capitulation in February 1942. The catastrophic Bengal famine of 1943 which saw mortalities of somewhere between one and four million people has been linked by several Indian scholars to wartime expenditure and inflation.[16] Understandably they reframe these many events empathetically with reference to oral and local language histories, most notably, in Diya Gupta's 'emotional history' of the Second World War.[17]

When compared with these disasters and challenges to imperial authority, wartime incarceration in India occurred backstage, as a transit zone between the European and Asian theatres of conflict. Tilak Sareen's *Japanese Prisoners of War in India, 1942-46*

[13]Paul Von Tucher, *Nationalism: Case and Crises in Missions*, *German Missions in British India* 1939-1946 (Erlangen: Paul Von Tucher, 1980), http://www.gaebler.info/politik/tucher.pdf. Accessed 22 July 2024. Provides 38 interviews of German missionaries.

[14]Commonwealth War Graves Commission, How to Find and Visit Indian War Dead from the World Wars, India and the Two World Wars, https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/blog/how-to-find-and-visit-indian-war-dead-from-the-world-wars/. Accessed 30 November 2023.

[15]G.J. Douds, 'The men who never were: Indian POWs in the Second World War', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 27, 2 (2004), pp. 183-216, p. 185.

[16]Senjuti Mallik, 'Colonial Biopolitics and the Great Bengal Famine of 1943' *GeoJournal*, 88, 3 (2023), pp. 3205-3221; see also most famously, Amartya Sen, 'Chapter 6: The Great Bengal Famine' 52-85 in Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1981).

[17]Diya Gupta, *India in the Second World War: An Emotional History* (London: Hurst, 2023).

offers a comprehensive account of Japanese military prisoners.[18] Bob Moore enumerates British India's Italian POWs, several thousand of whom were subsequently transported to Australia for wartime agricultural and infrastructural labour.[19] Civilian internment in India has likewise attracted attention with Lubinski et al. writing on interned employees of German multinational firms, and Paul von Tucher on German missionaries in India.[20] A detailed account of Japanese internees in British India is given by Christine de Matos and Rowena Ward.[21] They combine official records with three individual narratives from (a) a diary of Japanese businessman, Fukuda Kurahachi, (b) an oral recording of Nora Newbury Inge, a British woman and former camp guard at both Delhi and Deoli camps, and (c) the memoir of a Thai internee, Karuna Kusalasaya. Kusalasaya is our link to the artist Fua Haribhitak.

Responses to the allied war effort were markedly different in India's neighbouring countries from which internees were drawn. For example, Thailand's historical progression was relatively uninterrupted by European colonisation, unlike Ceylon, Burma or India. Buddhist religious culture flourished and was protected by a constitutional monarchy established in 1932. The country had defended its autonomy by negotiating unequal treaties with its British and French colonial neighbours, and focused on self-preservation, a strategy that continued with the outbreak of war.[22] Entering into an Alliance Pact with Japan on 21 December 1941, Thailand provided a safe staging point for Japanese entry into Southeast Asia and rallying point for the pro-Japanese Burma Independence Army as well as the INA. The British colony, Ceylon, conversely, was declared a war zone following the 15 February 1942 Fall of Singapore and assumed a 'surrogate' role as a new imperial base camp. From November 1943, Kandy was also the headquarters for the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC).[23] The

[18]Tilak Sareen, *Japanese Prisoners of War in India: Bushido and Barbed Wire* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2006).

[19]Bob Moore, 'Enforced Diaspora: The Fate of Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War.' *War in History*, 22, 2 (2015), pp. 174–190, p. 177.

[20]Christina Lubinski, Valeria Giacomin, and Klara Schnitzer, 'Countering Political Risk in Colonial India: German multinationals and the challenge of internment 1914-1947', Harvard Business School Working Paper, 18-090, 2018. https://www.hbs.edu/ris/download.aspx?name=18-090.pdf. Accessed 22 July 2024; and Paul Von Tucher, *Nationalism: Case and Crisis in Missions*, *German Missions in British India* 1939-1946 (Erlangen, Elbstverlag, Paul von Tucher, 1980), http://www.gaebler.info/politik/tucher.pdf. Accessed 22 July 2024.

[21]de Matos and Ward, 'Forgotten Forced migrants'.

[22]E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, *1940-45* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994). *Thailand*, pp. 3-4.

[23]Ashley Jackson, *Ceylon at War 1939-45* (Warwick: Helion and Co. 2018), p. 27, p. 119.

conservative Ceylon National Congress backed Britain's war effort, in return asking for self-determination after the war.[24]

Scholars and literati in both these countries were additionally influenced by Indian *swadeshi* (self-rule) fervour ignited by half a century of social and political activism and intellectual culture emanating from Bengal. The 'Bengali Renaissance' produced an organic but equally transnational modernity. Its institutional embodiment was Visva Bharati, literary giant Rabindranath Tagore's university at Santiniketan in West Bengal. An Eastern model of education, with classes held outdoors or in buildings refashioned after Asian historical precedents attracted students from all over Asia, including Fua and Karuna.

The Thai Internees, Fua and Karuna

Frustrated by the rigidity of Thailand's Arts and Crafts School, Fua Tong Yoo's (Fua Haribhitak's original given name), departed for Visva Bharati in 1941 with recommendations from his professor Silpa Bhirasri (the Italian-born sculptor Corrado Feroci).[25] Travelling through northern Thailand and colonial Burma, he arrived in Calcutta before war broke out. The then elderly Tagore had experimented with Continental trends, which following the 1922 Calcutta Bauhaus exhibition, had radicalised art practice. His methods appealed to Fua.

During his brief sojourn at Santiniketan, starting from 20 July 1941, Fua produced numerous sketches and water colour renderings of people and landscapes and studied fresco painting under the pioneering modernist Nandalal Bose, a skill that ignited his later interests. He also suffered two personal tragedies, the death of his beloved grandmother Tabtim and the illness of his wife M.R. Thanomsakdi Kridakara.[26] A sketch of a weeping Fua and four treasured letters hidden away throughout internment, and archived by Tiravan Vanichtheeranont, are indicative of his emotional state.[27] The escalating war in Europe was felt in British India. Police permission was needed to travel to Calcutta for books and supplies. Arrested as an enemy national by the Bolapur District police on 8 February 1942, Fua was interned at the Purana Qila camp. The techniques of interwar Cubism that Fua had learned at Santiniketan effectively conveyed the internee's powerlessness against that iconic backdrop. His biographer Somporn Rodboon notes that religion and art were Fua's only consolations, and that he spent his last 600 rupees on a book on spiritualism by Swami

[24]Ibid., pp. 210-212.
[25]Somporn Rodboon, *The Life and Works of Fua Hariphitak* (Bangkok: SITCA Investment & Securities, 1993), p. 27, p. 33.
[26]Ibid., p. 35.
[27]Tira Vanichtheeranont, *111th Anniversary of Fua Hariphitak: The Untold Stories from Fua's Archive* (Bangkok: Vision PrePress, 2023), p. 73.

Sivananda of the Himalayan Ruese-Ghaet Hermitage and sought membership in his Divine Life Society.[28] The practice offered him peace of mind through various hardships including malaria, anaemia, and dysentery.[29]

Fua drew the people around him, including the prize-winning 'Japanese Internment Camp' and 'The Floral Garden' for an art exhibition organised by internees.[30] Many of these drawings were executed after the internees moved from Purana Qila to Rajasthan's Deoli Internment Camp. After the war the original colour rendering was left behind and the drawing replicated based on the graphite sketch.[31] Meanwhile, conditions in Thailand under the new alliance were precarious for the families of the internees, although not as severe as in the Japanese-occupied former British and Dutch colonies. The Seri Thai (Free Thai) movement went underground, and political figures and military officials were forced to take sides. Many Chinese Thais maintained risky alliances with China. Fua's family, including his young son, evacuated and settled in Battambang, Cambodia.[32]

Compared to Fua, the thirteen-year-old orphan Kimhong (Karuna Kusalasaya's given name) followed a different path, accompanying the Venerable. Lokanatha (Salvatore Cioffi), an Italian Buddhist missionary from Brooklyn, in 1933.[33] This opportunity proved transformative for the young Chinese boy eager to leave his relatives raft house and resume his education. He shaved off his pigtail, was ordained as *samanera*, Karuna Kuslalasaya and travelled with 200 others to Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Burma and, in a smaller group, to India.[34] The tour ended when several in the group contracted malaria, including Karuna, who remained convalescing in Calcutta, cared for by a Lankan delegation.[35] Karuna followed them to Sarnath where he studied Hindi, English and Pali before seeking a secular education at Visva Bharati University with the Maha Bodhi Society's permission.[36]

Influenced by his teachers, Karuna observed the politicisation of Indians, meeting and visiting Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and attended a meeting of the National Congress at Sarnath.[37] He corresponded with Nehru when the latter was imprisoned at Dehradun.

---

[28]Rodboon, *Hariphitak*, p. 39; Wanichteeranon, *111th Anniversary*, p. 92.
[29]Ibid., p. 35.
[30]Ibid., p. 35.
[31]Wanichteeranon, *111th Anniversary*, pp. 89-90.
[32]Rodboon, *Hariphitak*, p. 39.
[33]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 70-72.
[34]Ibid., p. 73-79.
[35]Ibid., p. 85-87.
[36] Ibid., p. 91.
[37]Ibid., p. 93.

At Santiniketan he studied Sanskrit and 'Indology' in curricula influenced by the elderly Tagore who passed away in August 1941.[38] He worked predominantly under Tan Yun Shen at *Cheena Bhavan*, Visva Bharati's institute for Chinese studies.[39] Karuna addressed Fua, the only other Thai at the university, as elder brother (*phee*).[40] Following Japan's invasion of Thailand, Karuna too was arrested as an enemy national on 8 December 1941, and interned at the Purana Qila camp, recently vacated by evacuees.[41] He was joined by Fua, and a Thai *bhikkhu* named Phra Baidika Sod Sinhaseni, who had been living in an Assamese Namphake village among the Indigenous Tai-Ahom since 1941. There were two student-*bhikkhu*, Maha Sawaeng Na-Angthong and Kambir Khadthongkha, both were arrested in Colombo, Ceylon on 12 March 1942.[42] The five of them were now held alongside the Japanese internees.

Purana Qila Camp, New Delhi

Official Red Cross correspondence from April 1942 enumerates the Japanese incarcerated in Delhi's Purana Qila as totalling 2,811 persons; 1841 men, 727 women, 243 children.[43] Some 2,598 were sent from Malaya, Singapore and North Borneo, seventy-four from Burma and Iran and 139 from within India.[44] The transfer of camp management from British India's Defence Department to the Home Department, a

[38]Ibid., p. 92.

[39]Tan Shun ed., *In the Footsteps of Xuanzang: Tan Yun-Shan and India* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi 1991), p. 23. https://ignca.gov.in/divisionss/kalakosa/kalasamalocana/in-the-footsteps-of-xuanzang-tan-yun-shan-and-india/. Accessed 22 July 2024.

[40]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 95.

[41]BL IOR: L/PJ/8/64, Coll.101/11G, 1942-43 Internment of Japanese in India, Telegram from Swedish Consul General at New Delhi to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Stockholm, 11 December 1942.

[42]Lipi Ghosh, 'Ethnicity, Cross-Border Migration vs. Identity and Cultural Matrix – A Study of Tai-Ahoms in Northeast India, https://www.academia.edu/6065300/Ethnicity_Cross_Border_Migration_vs_Identity_and_Cultural_Matrix_A_Study_of_Tai_Ahoms_in_Northeast_India. Accessed 30 November 2023. The colonial government had forced this group to assimilate into a broader indigenous identity. Karuna mentions Ismail Ahmed, arrested in Moradabad, but his name is not in the official record.

[43]BL IOR: L/PJ/8/64, Coll.101/11G, 1942-43 Internment of Japanese in India 'Treatment of Japanese Internees in India'. Japanese Interned in India, Complaint About Food and Money, 6 April 1942.

[44]BL IOR/I/PJ/8/34, Coll.101/10/AB, Aliens-reports of internment camps in India, Government of India, Home Department, Administration of Internment Camps in India-General, 12 January 1943.

civilian authority, had occurred earlier in December 1941.[45] Although the government insisted that camp conditions were no different to 'native' troop quarters elsewhere in India, the rudimentary accommodation and inadequate rations suggests that the Japanese were seen as an inferior and backward culture when compared with the European internees. Any problems were attributed to climatic factors with suspicion that the issue was being politicised to counter accusations of maltreatment by Japanese armies elsewhere.[46] Temporary conditions persisted beyond twelve months, until the barracks at the Deoli Camp, at the time occupied by European internees, were vacated.[47]

The fortified enclosure of Purana Qila included a hospital, 468 military tents with a brick floor and thatch covering accommodated 2,561 internee men, while 250 internee women and children slept within the fort's stone arcades.[48] Each tent was equipped solely with cots fitted with mattresses and woollen blankets. Karuna recollected; 'our hands, feet and faces – especially our lips – were cracked and blistered on account of the cold.'[49] The neglected thick undergrowth had also made the Fort a mosquito breeding ground.[50] Beriberi and malaria took a heavy toll, and by May 1942 there had been sixteen deaths, eleven of them women.[51]

With his knowledge of Hindi, Karuna became a go-between; bartering precious personal items for food and clothing with the collusion of the sympathetic Indian guards.[52] When a Japanese businessman departing the camp on a prisoner exchange in August 1942 gifted him a gold buckle, Karuna bought new clothing and abandoned his novitiate.[53] By January 1943, after the repatriation of 720 civilians there were 2,072 internees (1,302 males, 563 women and 207 children) in the camp.[54]

---

[45]Ibid.
[46]Ibid., Swedish Delegation a Protecting Power, telegraphic communication to Foreign Office, London, 13 November 1942. Government of India Telegram, 5 December 1942.
[47]Ibid., Prisoner of War Department, Harold Satow to R.N. Gilchrist, India Office, 30 December 1942; Telegram from Swedish Consul General at New Delhi to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Stockholm, 11 December 1942.
[48]Ibid., Government of India, Home Department, Telegram, 26 October 1942.
[49]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 96.
[50]Ibid., 98.
[51]BL IOR L/PJ/8/31, Coll.101/10AA, Nominal roll of Internees and paroles in India, July 1943.
[52]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 98.
[53]Ibid., p. 97, p. 99.
[54]BL IOR: L/PJ/8/64, Coll.101/11G, 1942-43, Internment of Japanese in India, Telegram from Swedish Consul General at New Delhi, 11 December 1942.

By April 1943 there were five civilian internment camps in India that were controlled by the Home Department: the Central Internment Camp at Premnagar, Dehradun, internment camps respectively in Deoli, and Delhi, and two internment camps for families, and parole centres at Purandhar and Satara with the expectation that the majority in Delhi would be moved to Deoli.[55] The Purandhar and Satara camps concentrated parolees from seven recently closed parole centres throughout India.[56] The former had held many Jewish or mixed-race-Jewish internees, and the latter mainly women. By 29 June 1943, the internee population across the four remaining camps following New Delhi's closure was 5,716 persons.[57]

Deoli Camp, Ajmer

Once the European internees were removed from Deoli to Dehradun, three vacated wings (1, 2 and 4) were dedicated to 'Japanese internees' from Delhi, as well as 287 Javanese seamen detained on behalf of the Dutch authorities.[58] Karuna describes the barracks as 'one-storeyed, brick walled, lime-plastered and roofed with stone tiles…[each as]…long as three or more railway compartments put together, and each housing 100-200 persons'….' durable and protective' when compared to the tented Purana Qila camp.[59] When they arrived in April 1942, he observed thousands of German and Italian prisoners cheering at a distance from their respective wings. The newcomers were disheartened by the desolate desert location, seemingly proof that the war would drag on. They would remain there until repatriation in May 1946. By February 1945, the Japanese Wings held 2,125 internees: wings 1 and 2 held 743 Japanese males, and 576 females and children; Wing 4 held 784 Japanese males, an 'A' isolation unit, and a hospital for twenty-two Japanese and Korean ex-'Comfort Battalion' women (enslaved sex workers) left behind by the Japanese in central Burma.[60]

---

[55]Ibid., R.N. Gilchrist, India Office to Harold Satow POW Department, 12 April 1943.
[56]UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) FO916/572, Internment camps in India and Ceylon Administration of Internment Camps in India General, 12 January 1943, Extract from Government of India Express letter. They were at Shillong, Katapahar, Nainital, Subathu, Hazaribagh, Yercaud, and Kodaikanal.
[57]BL IOR/L/PJ/8/30B, Coll.101/10A-Pt1, Aliens-treatment in India. Administration of internment camps India General, 3 August 1943.
[58]BL IOR/L/PJ/8/64, Coll. 101/11/G, Internment of Japanese in India -Conditions of Camps, Administration of the Internment Camps in India, General, 3 August 1943.
[59]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 100
[60]BL IOR/L/PJ/8/64, Coll. 101-11G, Civil Internment Camp, Deoli Adjmer, 10-13 February 1945, Visit by JA Rikli and H Frei.

Official correspondence boasts of a well-run establishment; an excellent climate from October to April, and an 'outstanding' increase in gardening activity, not only around the barracks, but in a large plot outside the camp.[61] A variety of flowers and vegetables were judged and awarded prizes at the camp horticultural show. There was fishing in the nearby lake, educational classes for adults and children and sewing groups run by the Camp Commandant's wife. In fact, Fua's second painting of a floral garden makes more sense given this depiction of Deoli.[62] The detailed individual flowers he depicted suggest the minute practices of care and diversion, entirely different from Japanistic landscapes and military shrines. They countered the intolerable ennui and austerity and were created in each locality with materials at hand. A photograph in the ICRC collection shows an entrance to a military building with a statue of a lion poised before a miniature garden with bridge and pagoda (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Deoli – India, Miniature Garden.[63] The pedestal is inscribed on the right with *Shōwa 18-nen 8-gatsu* (Year 18 of Shōwa period (the era of the contemporary emperor – 1943), July) which was built by Japanese. The inscription under the lion mentions 'garden'.

[61]Ibid.
[62]Dhep Chuladul, *Journey to Homeland* (Bangkok: Office of Contemporary Art and Culture), undated catalogue, 'Floral Garden', 1945, plate 4.
[63]ICRC Archives (ARR) V-P-HIST-03480-14A.

Another shows pebbled patterning around plants, a smiling girl and baby, and an onlooker on the veranda (Figure 4). The ICRC noted 230 rock gardens – which labour alleviated depression, they thought.[64] These culturally inflected gardens challenged the punitive environment's overall banality enabling collective resilience and group cohesion. Internment gardens were an exceptional, temporary phenomenon sprouting across the war's broader carceral landscape, including in Australia and North America, and not only amongst Japanese internees but also the Italian POWs who built altars and grottos in India.

Figure 4. Deoli, India, Miniature Garden.[65]

The barrack environments were likewise comparable to military style internment camps, imposing their regimental uniformity, with separate barracks for families, widows and orphans, shops and trades.[66] Notably, there was a Buddhist temple in

[64]BL IOR/L/PJ/8/30B, Coll.101/10A-Pt1, Aliens-treatment in India. Japanese Civil Internment Camp at Deoli/Ajmer. Visit by J.A. Rikli and A. de Spindler from 24-26 August 1943.
[65]ICRC Archives (ARR) V-P-HIST-03480-13A.
[66]BL IOR/L/PJ/8/64, Coll.101/11/G, Civil Internment Camp, Deoli/Adjmer, 22-24 August 1944. Visit by Charles Huber and A de Spindler.

Wing 2. Like at family camps elsewhere in North America or Australia, education was continued.[67] The diet too was expanded to include bean-paste soup and pickled vegetables with requests for *kombu* and *wakame* (types of seaweed). Malaria at 362 cases was the main medical concern followed closely by dysentery and diarrhoea, with 15 deaths across all three wings in 1944.[68]

Karuna's memoir mentions acute water shortages caused by the desert location and searing summer wind with fine wind-borne sand – the *loo* – that confined them to the barracks from 12 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fua's evocative 1942 watercolour on paper drawing 'Awning' depicts skeletal trees in a windswept desert landscape. The drawing style is attributed to Bose's influence closely following the wash techniques of Abanindranath Tagore, but the subject matter – the sensation at the centre of a storm is more evocative, perhaps, of Fua's emotional state.[69] Conversely, during winter nights, Karuna complained of intolerable hunger pangs. Their rations, depleted by the devastating Bengal famine, had to be supplemented by eating dogs' and cats' meat supplied by Okinawan internees. Karuna, once again, appealed to sympathetic Indian guards who 'furtively' supplied him with a portion of their *rotis*.[70] The expanded 'European' Premnagar Internment Camp at Dehradun, in the Himalayan foothills was envied, and is indicative of preferential treatment for European internees.

The German *Bhikkhus* at Premnagar Internment Camp, Dehradun

Although a minority when compared with the large numbers of Christian and Catholic missionaries at the camp, Premnagar's European *bikkhus* shared the Buddhist theological foundations of Burmese, Thai and Ceylonese-Sinhala cultures that see India as their point of genesis. They were guided, however, by their different missions and were cosmopolitan in the sense that already, before the war, they had become naturalised through ordainment, learning ancient and modern Asian languages. They had embarked on pilgrimages across Asia's Buddhist sites recruiting disciples and establishing centres - as well as, in some cases, engaging with independence activists. Debates regarding changes in Buddhist practice from the nineteenth century onwards – from transmission towards proselytization – are important for understanding both the instrumentality of modern Buddhist agents in resisting Christian hegemony in

[67]Ibid., Civil Internment Camp, Deoli/Adjmer, 22-24 August 1944.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Sirintorn Haribhitak and Yin Ker, 'Conjugating Legacies: Fua Haribhitak (1910-1993), Bagyi Aung So 1923-1990): from *Śāntiniketan* to Bangkok & Yangon', Hypotheses, Papers from the School of Doctoral Studies in Art History and Archaeology, Sorbonne, Paris, 4 May 2021, https://124revue.hypotheses.org/6131. *Accessed 22 July 2024.*
[70]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 102.

British colonies and of Western converts for translating Buddhist scriptures with the aim of countering atheism in the West.[71]

Moved there from Ceylon's Diyatalawa camp, after Ceylon was declared a security zone, Ñānatiloka Thera, spent the war at Premnagar internment camp.[72] The first Continental European to be ordained as a monk, he had travelled in Burma and Malaya before setting up the Polgasduwa Island Hermitage, in southern Ceylon in 1911 (Figure 5). The Hermitage was dedicated to the study of Theravada Buddhism and attracted a consistent flow of Western converts as well as some among the marginalised Rodiya. Ñānatiloka was arrested and interned during the First World War, initially in the Hermitage and later at Ceylon's Diyatalawa Camp (Figure 6) before transportation to Australia's Liverpool Camp and then to Trial Bay Prison, both in New South Wales.[73] By the time of his second internment at Diyatalawa Camp during the Second World War, he and his four German disciples distrusted the British.

Figure 5. Polgasduwa Island. Photographed by author March 2024.

[71]See Linda Learman, *Buddhist Missionaries in the Age of Globalization* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2005).
[72]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, pp. 45-63 and pp. 138-152.
[73]Ibid., p. 63.

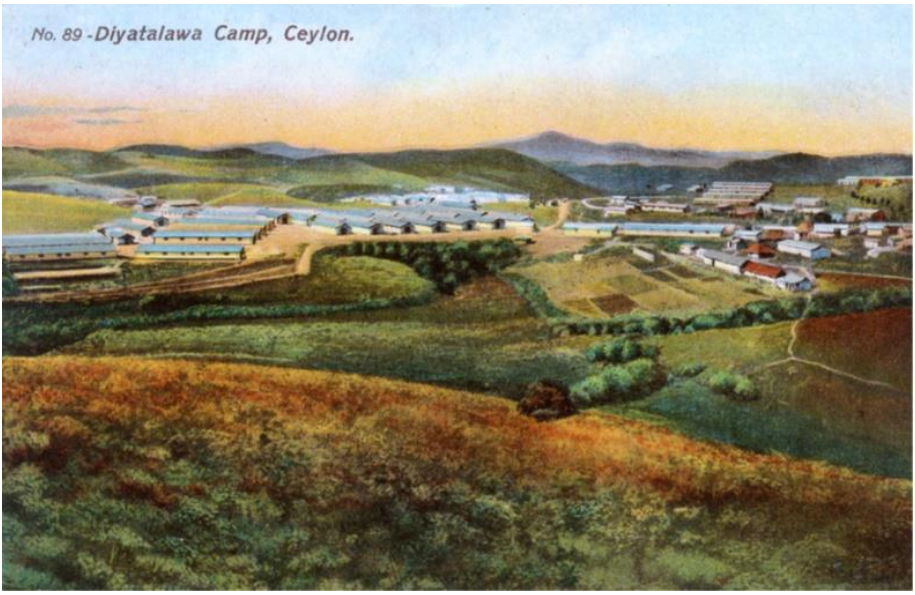

Figure 6. Ceylon's Diyatalawa Camp.[74]

Dehradun in the Himalayan foothills, surrounded by tea plantations reminded Ñānatiloka, of southern Switzerland.[75] Seven separate barbed wire enclosed camp 'wings' were divided between Germans and Italians, but firstly according to their political affiliations: anti- or pro-National Socialist.[76] A 1943 drawing by the formerly Bombay-based German interior designer and then internee Ernst Messerschmidt, depicts '*Campus Teutonicus* (Latin for German)', at the centre of a Roman-like encampment with the buildings named after their associations and uses for the internees. The drawing, titled a 'sad place of exile for Mortimer de Belling' is an invitation for a fellow German internee's thirtieth birthday party (Figure 7). Wing 1, at the centre and flanked by the Jewish section on the right and the Italians on the left. housed 'bara sahibs' – representatives of German trading companies, independent traders, doctors, missionaries, teachers, scientists, and the *bhikkhus* at first among them, and four members of a Himalayan mountaineering expedition; Wing 2 housed German rubber planters arrested by the Dutch in Sumatra; Wing 5 was for Germans from Ceylon and Wing 4 for all remaining others. In short, the wings were additionally divided by place of arrest and class. The Italian wings were likewise divided into Fascist

[74]Alamy Stock photo.
[75]Ibid., p. 139.
[76]Ibid., p. 139. Note that the number of wings changes in different records to 6, 7 and 8, as new wings were allocated for different groups.

and anti-Fascist sections; for generals arrested in North Africa, for Catholic missionaries, for others and a dedicated hospital wing. Similar internal divisions were apparent in the Purandhar and Satara camps.

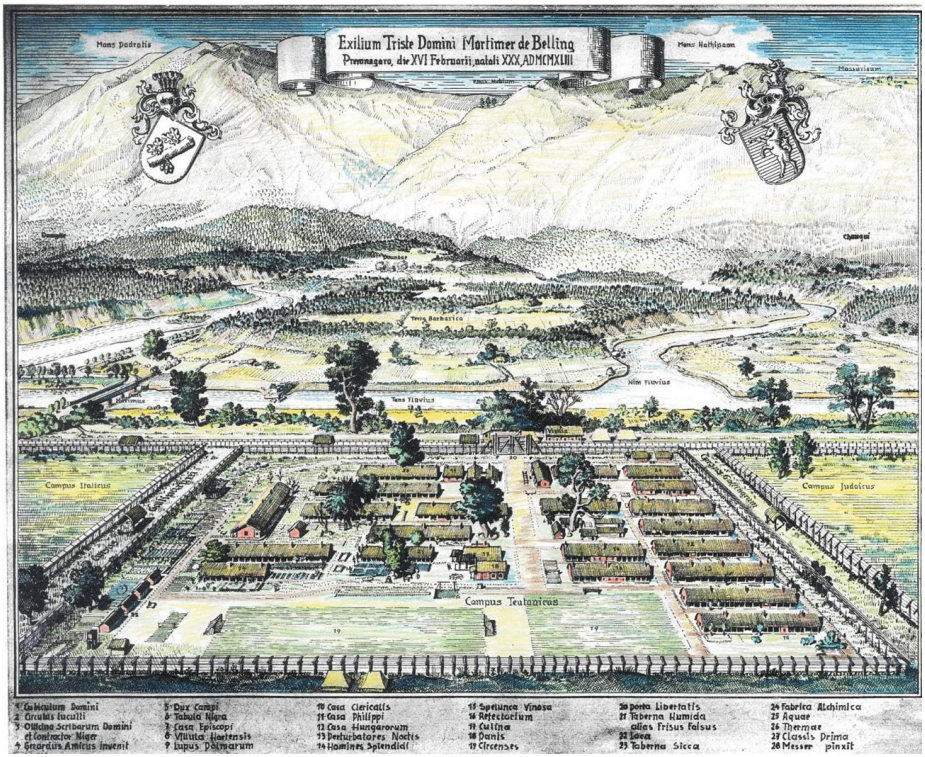

Figure 7. Campus Teutonicus with the False Frisian, drawn by Ernst Messerschmidt, 1943.[77]

Although not interned together, Ñānatiloka's biography depicts the Hermitage's *bikkhus* seated in the garden at Dehradun Camp. Ñānatiloka and Vappo (Ludwig Stolz) remained in the pro-Nazi Wing 1 and his disciples the Jewish *bhikkhus* Ñānaponika (Sigmund Feniger), Ñānakhetta (Peter Schönfeldt) and his brother Ñānamalita (Malte) moved to the newly completed anti-Nazi Wing 5. With them was Anagarika Govinda (Lothar Hoffman), a German *bhikkhu* with British citizenship interned for his

[77]Image copy by Walter Buelle, 2013. Reproduced with permission from Christoph Gäbler

associations with the Nehru family.[78] Ñānatiloka's biographers surmise that previous (mis)treatment by the British, and in Australia, including a bad experience with a pro-Communist crew on a Ceylon-bound ship, may have informed his choice. The presence of Jewish *bhikkhus* at his Ceylon hermitage and accompanying him to internment seemingly absolve him of Nazi leanings. Westerners in Wing 1 were treated well so as 'to preserve the natives' esteem for the whites'.[79] In fact:

> The camp was like a little town with a cinema, a soccer field, and two tennis courts. There was a workshop, library, hospital, a canteen, an orchestra, and even a school with authorisation to give diplomas. Many internees kept animals and made gardens in front of their barracks. The internees were also given holidays once or twice a week on word of honour, so that they could go for walks in the beautiful surroundings.[80]

Ñānatiloka's internment was productive. He wrote his famed Buddhist Dictionary, and prepared German translations of his English works while Ñānaponika completed German translations of several Pali texts. There were compromises. The crowds, the noise, and the intolerance of inmates prevented their meditation activities. The mainly meat-based camp rations of roast beef, cabbage, potatoes, goulash and dumplings, did not anticipate their vegetarianism.[81] Like Karuna, both Ñānakhetta and his brother Ñānamalita disrobed, the latter to become a Hindu Swami, but equally Friedrich Möller (later Ñānavimala, a postwar disciple of Ñānatiloka) embraced Buddhism in the Premnagar camp.[82]

There was considerable national diversity in the internee population. Wings 2 and 4 held Germans, Austrians, Italians, Englishmen (or British citizens), Czechs, Estonians, Costa Ricans, Finns, Greeks, Lithuanians, Hungarians, Poles, Romanians, Russians, Yugoslavs, and French.[83] Italians unwilling to be housed with their countrymen were with the Germans in Wings 2 and 3 and the latter included a Roman Catholic chapel. The sixty-five persons in the Wing 5 Ceylon group included Germans and Hungarians, while Wing 1 included two Danes. Wing 6 was for German sailors, considered POWs.

[78]Lama Anagarika Govinda, *The Way of the White Clouds*, (London: Rider, 1966).
[79]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, p. 140.
[80]Ibid.
[81]Ibid., p. 144.
[82]Ibid., p. 158.
[83]IOR/I/PJ/8/34, Coll.101/10/AB, Aliens-reports of internment camps in India, Central internment Camp, Premnagar/Dehradun, visit by Charles Huber and A. de Spindler, 5 May 1942.

Upon arrival, internees complained through the Swiss ICRC delegates of poorly thatched roofing, and deplorable and unsanitary conditions, with Wing 5's Hong Kong, Shanghai and Ceylon businessmen, used to privacy and furnishings at the Diyatalawa Camp, the most incensed.[84] When the Home Department defended their actions, the agency responded that, 'the situation in prisoner of war camps in India has given rise to some complaint…[85]

Resistance and Unrest

Protests and civil disobedience augmented the complaints. The much publicised escape from an Indian internment camp of seven 'Germans' from Premnagar in April 1944 included two Himalayan mountaineers, and two Austrian nationals Peter Aufschnaiter and Heinrich Harrer.[86] Their escape has been popularised in the 1997 Hollywood film *Seven Years in Tibet*.[87] The *bhikkhu* Ñānakhetta, likewise, briefly, escaped and befriended a Hindu yogi in the mountains who helped him achieve *samadhi*, a state of deep meditation, before returning to camp.[88] He became the Hindu Swami Gauribala at the end of 1944 and settled in Jaffna, Ceylon. Karuna Kusalasaya never tried to escape, but got caught during a lockdown at Deoli, while visiting his Japanese sweetheart, Yoko Morimoto, in the women's section of Wing 1.[89] The romance ended with her repatriation to Japan. He spent 28 days in detention in the camp punishment cells. Fua's graphite sketch of Yoko is among Karuna's mementos.

Compared to these isolated episodes, civil disobedience was a ritual practice for the Italian *bhikkhu* from Brooklyn. Philip Deslippe observes that although his scientific training as a chemist diverted Ven. Lokanatha away from his Roman Catholic faith and towards Buddhist theology, he nevertheless possessed a Catholic-like missionary zeal.[90] Following his ordainment in Rangoon in 1925 Lokanatha had organised several group pilgrimages to Buddhist sites in India, Burma and Ceylon, including the one for which Karuna was recruited.[91] Facing internment in 1941, he appealed to his siblings

[84]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, p. 140.
[85]IOR/I/PJ/8/34, Coll.101/10/AB, Aliens-reports of internment camps in India, Government of India, Home Department, to Secretary of State for India, London, 9 March 1943; and IOR/I/PJ/8/34, Coll.101/10/AB, Aliens-reports of internment camps in India, Government of India, Home Department, to Secretary of State for India, London, 9 March 1943.
[86]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, p. 142.
[87]The film was directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud.
[88]Ibid., p. 143.
[89]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 106.
[90]Philip Deslippe, 'Brooklyn Bhikkhu: How Salvatore Cioffi Became the Venerable Lokanatha', *Contemporary Buddhism*, 14, 1 (2013), pp. 169-186, p. 169.
[91]Ibid., 'Brooklyn Bhikkhu', p. 171.

for an affidavit proving his US citizenship, but chose internment when they made it conditional on his reconversion to Catholicism.[92]

Lokanatha's race, citizenship and philosophical orientation confounded the authorities. Or perhaps they equated Italian birth with Fascist ideology. He was suspected of anti-colonial agitation, possibly due to his advocacy in Burma for separate hospital wards and male orderlies for *bhikkhus*.[93] Or was it due to his prewar associations with the Burmese independence leader Aung San and anti-caste social reformer Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar? The latter had renounced Hinduism and was being courted by various religious groups at the time.[94] Whatever the reason, Lokanatha's request to serve parole in Burma was denied on political grounds.[95] Records indicate his internment at Deolali in Maharashtra, Ramgarh in Patna, and Deoli in Rajasthan. Correspondence in 1945 discusses his transfer to the psychiatric hospital at the Bhopal POW camp.[96]

Deslippe, drawing from Italian sources, writes that Lokanatha came into 'dramatic conflict' with his jailors at Patna.

Unable to practice his Buddhism fully and to his satisfaction within the camp's rules, Lokanatha sat immobile in the open air during a 96-day hunger strike, returning to the same place each time the soldiers dragged him away. Once the British gave into his demands, Lokanatha stood up and silently returned to his barracks surrounded by the applause of his fellow prisoners.[97]

---

[92]Philip Deslippe, 'From Catholic to Chemist to Buddhist Missionary' Tricycle, *The Buddhist Review*, Winter 2017, https://tricycle.org/magazine/catholic-chemist-buddhist-missionary/. Accessed 22 July 2024.
[93]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 294.
[94]Deslippe, 'From Catholic to Chemist', pp. 172-3.
[95]National Archives of India, Abhilek Patal, Home Political EW/1941, NAF/10/108, 26 May 1941. Application For Transfer to Burma on Parole from Lokenatha [sic], Alias Salvatore Cioffi, Italian Buddhist Monk, on Behalf of Himself and Three Other Italians, V Cusmaroli, V Cignetti and L Galimerti, Interned in Deolali from Burma. Accessed 22 July 2024.
[96]Ibid., Home Political, Medical Section 1945, Progs. No. 46-20/45-M, Italian Internees 'Arnone Salvatore' and Cioffi Salvatore' who are suffering from mental disorders - Question of their transfer from Internment Camp Deoli to the Mental Hospital in the Prisoners of war camp at Bhopal.
[97]Deslippe, 'From Catholic to Chemist', p. 174. He cites, Paolo Pardo, Il bonzo Napoletano/The Neopolitan monk, *L'Espresso*, April 4, 1984, 50–58. Bernadino Del Boca, Birmania: un paese da amare/Burma: a country to love (Torino: L'Eta` dell'Acquario, 1989).

In this way, he practiced *satyagraha* (truth force) – politicised by Mahatma Gandhi. When Ramgarh was evacuated to accommodate soldiers of the Chinese Expeditionary Force towards the end of 1944, Lokanatha was sent to Deoli where he was reunited with Karuna.[98] Speaking to him through Wing 3's barbed wire fence, Lokanatha claimed several conversions of fellow Christian prisoners.[99]

The Jewish-Austrian writer Vamandas (Walther Eidlitz), quoted in Ñānatiloka's biography, describes Dehradun as torn by political factions, a microcosm of the hostilities in the world outside.[100] The National Socialists with their Gestapo-like hierarchy built on fear and suspicion; the anti-National Socialists agitating for democratic elections; a Church state in the Catholic wing, and Fascist and anti-Fascist divisions among the Italian military – the one group chanting provocative political slogans, and the other burning an effigy of the Duce.[101] Politically dominant Axis supporters even monopolised the cemetery so that anti-Nazis and anti-Fascists had to be buried in the next town.

Karuna likewise intimated a serious split within the Japanese internee population at Deoli in the months following the war's end, observing how internee emotions alternated between patriotic outbursts and deep despair, and how the surrender and the atomic bombings pitted patriotic youths (*kachi-gumi*/victory group) against realists (*make-gumi*/defeat groups).[102] He was sensitised to these events because Yoko's father was from a town near Nagasaki.[103] The anti-surrender internee faction attacked their rivals with knives and sharpened lathis (iron-bound bamboo stick).

Matos and Ward write that 'two aspects, defeat/victory and the desire to leave, fused to create a toxic environment.'[104] They discuss what is known as the '226 incident',

---

[98] Cao Yin, 'An Indian Town's Entry into the Second World War: Holding Together the Congress Party and Training Chinese Soldiers in Wartime Raj'. Accessed 22 July 2024. *China Report* 57, 1 (2021), pp. 95-110.

[99]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 107.

[100]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, pp. 143-151. Walther Eidlitz became a disciple of Sadananda Swami Dasa (Ernst-Georg Schulz) during his internment.

[101]Walther Eidlitz, *Journey to an Unknown India,* (Mandala Publishing Group, 1999) p. 87. Originally published in 1951 as *Bhakta: Eine indische Odysse*.

[102]Matos and Ward, 'Forgotten Forced migrants', 1106. Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 112.

[103]BL IOR: L/PJ/8/64 Coll.101/11G, Internment of Japanese in India, From Government of India, Home Department to Secretary of State for India, confidential telegram, 3 March 1946.

[104]Matos and Ward, 'Forgotten Forced migrants', p. 1106.

when the internees barricaded their wing, and the Commandant called in the Ajmer military. An official communication on 26 February 1946 reports that the internees stoned the military when they arrived.[105] Some sixty-seven rounds were fired, seventeen internees were killed and twenty-one were wounded, according to the report.

Delineations of Sovereignty

Our small cast of characters encountered varied territorial and ethnocultural interpretations of sovereignty that informed their identification as individuals, but also in relation to the place of capture, arrest or incarceration, as distinct from other forms of idealised place belonging. Focus on their experiences produces a more heterogeneous social history of the war than that in official imperial records. Fua's emotive artworks, and both Kusalasaya's and Ñānatiloka's memoirs offer culturally attenuated reflections on the camps. Lokanatha, in contrast, remains a controversial figure whose voice is mediated by academic interpretation, however, like these others, he too defies categorical essentialisation. Their stories help diffuse and disrupt taken for granted national boundaries even of postcolonial territories after the war. For all four internees and others who accompanied them, territorial or cultural sovereignty was multi-facetted and negotiated across several intersections of race, culture, nationality, and location and were related to diasporic belonging or the already fermenting anti-imperial political consciousness of dissent. Some were affected, by the specific wartime vulnerabilities caused by the perceived indeterminacy of their political affiliations at the time of their incarceration, which marked them as potentially subversive. At the war's end they were redistributed across Asia's newest delineations of political sovereignty and made choices largely shaped by their internment.

The spaces of internment in India likewise were transformed by decolonisation and the greater humanitarian catastrophe of Partition in 1947, when the vacated Purana Qila, Deoli, Dehradun and other camps were repurposed for uprooted refugees. Deoli would be reused fifteen years later for diasporic Chinese internees during the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict. These border struggles were the latest dramatic performances of nation-state sovereignty through which individual interests were realigned.

Internment deepened the Thai internees' longing for their homeland; released from its coercive alliance with Japan. Repatriated in September 1946, they passed via Singapore's Jurong Internment Camp for surrendered Japanese civilians to the Waterloo Street displaced persons camp for Asian *romusha* (forced labourers). They were no longer categorised alongside the Japanese internees. Karuna described it as a 'camp for cripples', an indictment on Japanese treatment of Asian labourers, and anxious to leave it, found the means to return to Bangkok with his fellow Thai

[105] Ibid.

internees.[106] Although invited back to Santiniketan, he chose to remain in his homeland, maintaining his affiliation with India through work with the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge and Indian Consulate. Later with his wife, Mae, Karuna translated several Indian works into Thai – including by Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.[107] Internment had inspired a desire to translate and communicate his appreciation of India, not merely as a place of cultural origins but of political change – to his fellow Thais. Meanwhile Fua, malarial and anaemic, returned to his ruined Bangkok home. He soon set off to study at the Academy of Fine Art in Rome, becoming an acclaimed modernist artist who, nevertheless, once back in his homeland, focused on the restoration of Thai Buddhist frescoes. For this work, he was awarded the 1983 Ramon Magsaysay Award.[108] While we can only speculate on Fua's changed focus, his study of fresco paintings at Santiniketan were certainly influential, along with a desire for a culturally more grounded practice.

The German *bhikkhus*, in contrast, faced the generalised requirement that all Germans be repatriated to a divided homeland, although their adopted homes were in Asia and their ordainment for them served as a rebirth. Their foster communities intervened and D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of the soon to be independent Ceylon invited them back to their Island Hermitage. They remained in Asia, unlike thousands of fellow Europeans, prisoners, soldiers and colonists who went to a war-damaged Europe from a demilitarised Asia. Their presence demonstrated a unique instance of Europeans embracing Asian cultural practices alongside other indigenous efforts at cultural recovery. Both Ñānatiloka and Ñānaponika were granted Sri Lankan (Ceylon) citizenship in 1951 and assumed significant roles in the translation and dissemination of the Pali canon in German and English.[109] They were patrons of the Lanka, later 'German', Dhammaduta Society (1952), a Buddhist foreign mission to their former homeland. A similar mission animated Lokanatha whose multivalent identification with the USA, Burma and Italy had fed his prewar ambition of mass conversions, now resumed after repatriation to Burma. His world tours attracted publicity redirected towards achieving world peace by his horror of the atomic bombings, comparable to Nipponzan-Myōhōji's peace pagodas, including in Rajgir, India. Lokanatha was featured in the *New Yorker* of March 1949.[110] Deslippe credits him for influencing Ambedkar's eventual embracing of Buddhism along with half a million Dalit converts in 1956.[111]

[106] Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', pp. 124-5.
[107] Ibid., p. 134, pp. 195-200.
[108] Rodboon, *Hariphitak*, pp. 58-69.
[109]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, p. 165.
[110]Lokanatha, *The New Yorker*, March 5, 1949, p. 23.
[111]Deslippe, 'From Catholic to Chemist', p. 176.

They all, including Ambedkar, attended the inaugural 1950 Ceylon conference for the World Fellowship of Buddhists.[112]

Wartime experiences undoubtedly influenced the post war choices of these individuals, shaping the Thai internees' efforts in cultural recovery, which in the case of the Ceylon *bhikkhus* extended to changed citizenship. Unlike many wartime internees' stories that are recounted as a past episode in India, their endeavours were integral to postwar decolonisation processes. They figured prominently in the co-construction of modern Buddhism through social and spiritual interactions between Asian and European Buddhists.[113] Whereas previously, these interactions occurred under the imperial radar, the countries to which they now returned – Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, by advocating for state protection of Buddhism, advanced postcolonial cultural recovery through majoritarian claims. Both Ñānatiloka and Lokanatha were venerated in their adopted homelands and their remains enshrined upon their deaths. Ñānatiloka was given a state funeral at Sri Lanka's Independence Square in 1957 and his ashes were interred at the Hermitage.[114] Following his untimely death in 1966, Lokanatha's remains were enshrined in the Sagaing, Taw Taung Bi Luu Chaung monastery near Mandalay.[115]

[112]Report of the Inaugural *Conference* and Proceedings of the. First Sessions of the *World* Fellowship of *Buddhists* held in Ceylon, from the 25th May to the 6th June, 1950.

[113]Alice Turner, Laurence Cox, and Brian Bocking, ' Introduction' in Brian Bocking, Phibul Choompolpaisal, Laurence Cox, Alicia M Turner, *A Buddhist Cross Roads: Pioneer Western Buddhists and Globalizing Asian networks, 1860-1960*, (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-13, p. 2.

[114]Ñānatusita and Hecker, *Ñānatiloka*, p. 167.

[115]Kusalasaya, '*Life Without...*', p. 203.