

# 13 Tourism relating to the new culture introduced by First World War German POWs

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During the First World War, Japan fought on the side of its ally Great Britain against Germany. The transportation to Japan of German prisoners captured in the Shandong peninsula of China enabled the expansion of German culture in Japan. Memories of those times have been kept alive through works of popular culture, and related places are consumed as tourism sites.

About 4,700 German and Austrian soldiers were taken as prisoners in the Japanese–German War, which ended with Germany’s surrender. The prisoners were transferred to 12 camps around the country, mainly in western Japan (Seto 2013; Utsumi 2005). Japan’s treatment of these prisoners was different from that meted out to prisoners of wars fought by Japan before the First World War, specifically the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. Owing to the short duration of the war, there was low hostility towards the German prisoners. Furthermore, Germany was thought of as a civilized Western European country, and German POWs were welcomed in Japan (Utsumi 2005: 93). At the ports where the prisoners entered the country, people waved Japanese and German flags and welcomed them with flowers. Some regions actively hosted prisoners with the aim of utilizing the Germans’ technological skills to boost the regional economy (ibid. 98). The Japanese acceptance of German prisoners of war was the first modern experience of such kind, and this acceptance became the basis of future cultural exchange between Japan and Germany.

The German prisoners in most camps received warm treatment. In many camps, prisoners formed communities and interacted with local residents, teaching them various skills, sharing their technical knowledge, and teaching about vegetable cultivation and cooking methods (Utsumi 2005). They were allowed to venture out of the camp boundaries twice a week, and some even went on excursions. Seto (2013) describes life in

the Ninoshima Prison Camp in Hiroshima prefecture, where the prisoners published newspapers, held lectures, and organized craft exhibitions, theatre, artistic and sports activities, and excursions. Barring the compulsory labour, it was difficult to think of these Germans as prisoners of war.

Meanwhile, the Bando Prison Camp, which was established in Naruto city in 1917 by merging the Tokuyama, Marugame, and Matsuyama camps, had a bowling alley, a printing shop, and even a beer hall. It also had its own currency that could only be used in the camp. But, it was the orchestra that made the Bando Prison Camp famous. The first full-length performance in Japan of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 was given in the camp (Utsumi 2005: 100–101). The 2006 film *Baruto no gakuen* (Ode to Joy) was made based on this story. Sets were constructed over a six-month period in Bando, where the camp was located. After filming had finished, it was opened to the public on 21 March 2006 under the name Bando Location Village. By 2009, when it closed, it had been visited by about 260,000 tourists. The tour guides in the location village introduced the history of the camp and the story behind the filming (Nakatani 2007: 45–46). It is a noteworthy example of the combination of memories of war, entertainment, and tourism.

On 26 December 1919, a year after the conclusion of the war, Japan announced the repatriation of its German prisoners of war. Although many prisoners returned to their home country or Qingdao, China, 171 chose to remain in Japan. Some prisoners used their skills and experience gained in captivity to establish food businesses. They made items that were not popular in Japan at the time, including ham, sausages, and bread. Some of these establishments continue to operate in Japan to this day.

The dramatic stories of these people who settled in Japan after their captivity are still talked about. Examples of such entrepreneurs include August Lohmeyer (1892–1962), who introduced *rōsuhamu* (sirloin ham), and Karl Juchheim (1886–1945), who turned Baumkuchen into a popular cake in Japan.

Lohmeyer worked in the meat processing industry before the war. He enlisted in the Navy in 1914 and went to China, where he was taken prisoner (Schmidt Muraki 2009). While in captivity, he served as a cook in the Kumamoto and Kurume prison camps. After the war, Lohmeyer remained in Japan and invented *rōsuhamu*, a Japanese-style ham made from sirloin. The livestock industry in Japan was not developed, and making ham from pork leg was technically difficult and costly. Instead, Lohmeyer made rolls of meat from the back and loins, which were not used at the time. They were processed into ham and

called *rōsuhamu*. His company continued to operate after the war and was taken over by his son. It still exists today having survived for over a century.

Baumkuchen is another item introduced by German prisoners to Japan. Literally meaning ‘wooden cake’ or ‘tree cake’, Baumkuchen is a traditional cake from Eastern Germany. It is not commonly found in other countries, yet has become popular in patisseries across Japan. Karl Juchheim, a German working in a confectionery store in Qingdao, did not participate in the fighting but was tried for the possession of a military register. During his time as a prisoner, in 1919 he baked and sold Baumkuchen at the Ninoshima German Crafts Fair held at the Hiroshima Prefectural Commercial Exhibition Hall (Seto 2013: 12). It was the first time Baumkuchen was made in Japan. After the First World War, he settled in Kobe to make Baumkuchen under the label Juchheim, which his wife took over after his death on 14 August 1945 (Etajima 1973: 240). Juchheim is still Japan’s leading Baumkuchen producer.

Incidentally, the Hiroshima Prefectural Commercial Exhibition Hall, where Juchheim first baked Baumkuchen, was at the hypocentre of the atomic bomb explosion on 6 August 1945. It is known now as the Atomic Bomb Dome and is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A place where a humanely treated prisoner introduced a new food into Japan after the First World War became a symbol of the tragedy and cruelty of war after the Second World War.

But perhaps the most dramatic case is that of Heinrich Freundlieb (1884–1955), whose story was fictionalized in a TV drama based on the experiences of prisoners of war. Freundlieb, who established a bakery in Qingdao in 1912 after retiring from the Navy, was conscripted again in 1914. He participated in the fighting but was taken prisoner and sent to a camp in Nagoya. After the war, he married a Japanese woman and worked as the first baker at the Shikishima Bakery Company founded in Nagoya in 1920. He later settled in Kobe in 1924 to run his own bakery and restaurant.

In 1977, NHK’s morning drama series *Kazamidori* (The Weather Vane) was based on his life. The exotic Western-style architecture of Kobe combined with an unusual story of an international marriage in the First World War period caused interest in the drama and a tourism boom in Kitano ward in Kobe, the main location of the series (Jang 2019). The weather vane on the roof of Freundlieb’s bakery became a symbol of Kobe and the broadcast date of the first episode, 3 October, was designated as Kobe Tourism Day. The house where Freundlieb lived was inherited by



Figure 13.1 Former Freundlieb house, Kobe. Author's photo.

his son, who later operated the bakery. The second floor was used as a memorial room until the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Owing to the damage caused by the earthquake, the building was donated to the city, and now, following renovations, is used as a café.

Of course, the examples introduced in this chapter should not make us overlook the fact that painful memories of war have been beautifully repackaged. There were also numerous instances of prisoners of war who were treated severely. Nevertheless, the story of German prisoners in the First World War is an example of how war can generate peaceful cultural exchange that underpins cultural, culinary, and contents tourism even a century after the war.

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