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# Battlefield Mementos Care of and Restitution of Japanese 'Good Luck Flags' and Cultural Heritage Objects from War in Museum Collections

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Battlefield Mementos  
Care of and restitution of Japanese 'Good Luck Flags'  
and cultural heritage objects from war in museum collections

Keywords: Museum Studies, WWII, Cultural Heritage, Japan, War Loot, Good Luck Flag, Yosegaki  
Hinomaru, NAGPRA

by  
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Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
Museum Studies

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## Abstract

In World War II one of the most common objects found on the battlefield in the Pacific Theater was that of the Japanese *Yosegaki Hinomaru* or “Good Luck Flag” These objects were some of the most looted items from the war and soon found themselves in the possession of veterans of World War II and their families. In the past few decades as these veterans pass, increasing numbers of veterans and their families attempt to return the flags to Japan, or museums in the United States, believing they are the most suited to care for such objects. However this presents unique problems for museums as these flags are nearly invariably illegally looted from the war dead, and possessing such objects could also cause ethical if not legal concerns. Despite no laws explicitly prohibiting the possession or sale of such cultural heritage objects I will look at such objects through a lens of NAGPRA and how they would be treated under their guidelines. I will cover Simon Harrison's approach to the cultural significance of the flags and how they have changed in function through the years as well as the impact of individuals who attempt to retribute the flags on their own initiative. I will then address what institutions like the Obon Society do in their mission to return Japanese Good Luck flags as well as how other museum institutions can assist or facilitate their mission.

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*To Anna, Evie, Sofia, Stephanie and my family*

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

The purpose of this project is to introduce and examine the cultural as well as moral significance of personal objects looted in the Second World War, focusing specifically on the unique Japanese *Yosegaki Hinomaru* or “Good Luck Flag” as they are known in English. The relative ignorance surrounding such objects has hindered museum professionals in being able to administer the highest level of care to the objects and their collections. These flags and related objects were created almost exclusively during Japan's empire-building days from the Sino-Japanese War, peaking in prevalence and remaining until the conclusion of World War II. These flags are deeply unique and personal with each one signed by the recipient's closest relatives and friends as a show of support, well-wishes and solidarity as the soldier is sent off to war. These flags were nearly universally worn on the person in battle as they were believed to carry protective capabilities or merely a symbol of what the soldier is fighting for. Due to the prevalence of the flags, and their small size made them easy to carry and hide, Allied soldiers looted an incalculable number of these flags off war dead despite such actions being specifically prohibited by the Geneva Conventions. In later sections I will also cover the meanings of the flags meant to those who returned home with them as trophies, and their desire to return such objects to surviving Japanese families in the twilight of their own lives, and what that act means to them. Also discussed is the phenomenon of the transformation of the cultural use of the object from a symbol of support and protection in war, to a sacred object used in funerary rites by relatives trying to bring peace to the souls of those lost in war. These objects and the education of said objects are important to the museum community as a whole as institutions related to history as well as holding unprecedented public-trust, many flags end up donated to museums and historical societies by individuals hoping to find someone who can take care of these flags, by aging veterans or surviving family members who have inherited such objects and do not know its significance. This creates a collections dilemma, both in the care and management of the objects as well as the legality of

institutions possessing such objects as almost invariably all have been illegally acquired from the war dead.

In my proposal I will introduce the Obon Society, a small non-profit organization that specializes in the collecting, research and restitution of Japanese Good Luck Flags to Japanese families and communities. How their efforts are worthwhile and needed in these times, before veterans and relatives of those who fought in the war are passing away. How this effort improves Japanese and American relations as well as increased academic awareness of the significance of these cultural objects. I will also touch on the fact that these objects are not well known and not addressed by any governmental or regulatory body regarding the legality of possession of such objects and related trafficking. How a federal law like NAGPRA can be an effective outline to view and address these objects like ritual objects in need of protection, and not just collector's items to be bought and sold on online auction sites. Building awareness of these flags will help museum collection managers identify Japanese Good Luck flags in their own collections as well as in potential donations, and help guide them in how to care for or facilitate restitution of such objects.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Throughout human history objects from different cultures find themselves in alien environments, either through trade, gifts, and many other means, including warfare. Typically objects that travel through different peoples and cultures have financial, intrinsic or practical value. However these are typically every day, mundane items, not objects attributed with a sense of sanctity, deep respect and representative of the native culture that created the object. Objects thought of as sacrosanct are well guarded and maintained. Commonly but not always, when such objects find themselves in the possession of foreigners it is through warfare. Historically, the most symbolic way to demonstrate superiority or domination over a rival people group was to capture their most sacred objects. After defeating one's enemies their most valuable objects were searched for and spirited away back to the victor's land, displaying them in triumph as symbols of victory, superiority over the defeated peoples. Such examples through history can be the Roman military's "Aquila" or 'eagle battle-standards'. If a unit had theirs stolen by the enemy, it signified complete defeat and dishonor for that respective unit, and they would do everything in their power to retrieve it. When wars end and peace treaties are signed, treaty conditions are contingent on the return of looted heritage. But what happens with the looted heritage that belongs not to a group but to an individual? This chapter will focus on the political, ethical, moral and professional debate over the return of the Japanese Good Luck Flag.

Personal items in war have always been looted or scavenged off of defeated, captured or killed combatants after a conflict. Normally in history this practice was universally accepted and victors would take anything of value from defeated enemies to be sold, traded or to augment one's own gear. In the twentieth century, this practice continued and was considered a natural part of war. In the Pacific Theater of the Second World War, between the Empire of Japan, and the Allied nations, primarily the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, one of the most common, and sought-after objects was the Japanese "Yosegaki Hinomaru".



The Japanese Yosegaki Hinomaru, known as a “Good Luck Flag” in English, is a standard national flag of Japan made of silk, with no standardized size but most commonly about a meter in length on its long side for easy handling by an adult. It would traditionally be presented to a soldier on the day he leaves his family and community for war. The soldier's friends, family, classmates and co-workers would all sign the flag, with their names as well as personal messages, wishing the departing soldier luck and good health while he is away. The flag would be normally written on radially away from the center red circle in the manner of the “Rising Sun” battle flag. Thus this is where the name is derived; *Yosegaki* meaning “writing sideways” and *Hinomaru* meaning “sun-circle”, referring to the center red circle in the center of the flag. In English we describe the flag not from the aesthetic perspective, but from its use, as a flag used to convey good luck to its owner. Thus “Good Luck Flag” is the most common way of describing the object. Although the exact time when this practice of writing on flags and presenting them to soldiers is not precisely known, as it seems this was a grassroots cultural practice that spread nationally, it is generally accepted that the practice first began during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. These were Japan's first international conflicts since the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and was the first time young Japanese men were sent overseas for combat.<sup>1</sup> These were limited engagements in scale and time, localized around the Korean Peninsula and Northeast China, though casualties were significant. Lasting less than two years, especially compared to the Second World War, and any flags made before 1931 are considered rare.<sup>2</sup> It generally accepted that between 1931 during the Manchurian Incident sparking hostilities towards China, and 1937 when large-scale warfare broke out between the two nations the Good Luck Flag practice became common.<sup>3</sup> Mass mobilization throughout the nation during the 1930s called upon virtually every healthy young man to contribute to the war effort through mandatory military service.

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1 Michael Bortner – Imperial Japanese Good Luck Flags and One-Thousand Stitch Belts, Schiffer Military Books, 2008

2 Michael Bortner – Imperial Japanese Good Luck Flags and One-Thousand Stitch Belts, Schiffer Military Books, 2008

3 Michael Bortner – Imperial Japanese Good Luck Flags and One-Thousand Stitch Belts, Schiffer Military Books, 2008

As this was never a standardized practice these flags are as varied and unique as the individual presented the flag, and deeply personal. However there are three main features that are found on every flag. First, the flag is a standard national flag of Japan, the *Hinomaru*, a large red circle centered upon a white background made of silk. Second, the phrase: 武運長久 (*Bu Un Chou Kyuu*) meaning loosely, “May your military fortunes be long lasting” is written most prominently on the flag, in the largest script. Finally, the recipient's name is written in similar or slightly smaller size somewhere on the flag. These flags were always made of silk, even until the very end of the war, though sometimes augmented with cotton reinforcing grommets or edges. Writing was done with a calligraphy brush and calligraphy ink.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes the writing became too crowded and people wrote in any available space they could, much like a yearbook. As in a school yearbook, some signers included only their name and title, while others included popular catchphrases. The hometown leaders, schools, and companies the soldier may have been associated with would also show their appreciation and support on the flag. Another common practice was blessing the flag at an important local Shinto Shrine, and receiving the Shrine's inked seal upon the flag. These flags would be presented to the soldier on the day they were scheduled to depart for duty. Extended family, friends and other acquaintances would all gather and to convey their well wishes and prayers first-hand along with the flag. Many accounts of the last memories of a loved one are associated with this ceremony, the last event before the soldier's departure with the flag as they left, never to return.<sup>5</sup> In essence the Good Luck Flag is a physical representation of the community supporting their soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Another aspect of the Good Luck Flags was the belief the flags carried magical properties either in creating a sort of “protective field” that would shield the soldier from harm, including bullets. Others dismissed the protection claims but felt they did improve their luck or ability to fight to their utmost before falling in battle. Therefore, soldiers almost always carried these flags into battle on their person,

4 The Conservation Center – Yosegaki Hinomaru: The Good Luck Flag, May 17, 2016

5 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

6 Michael Bortner – Imperial Japanese Good Luck Flags and One-Thousand Stitch Belts, Schiffer Military Books, 2008

either folded under their helmets along with personal photographs, or in their packs, and most personally, paralleling the cultural belief about covering one's belly facilitates good health, tucked in their waistband over their abdomens.<sup>7</sup> One may argue there was a sense of the spirit and support of the soldiers loved ones protecting them was just as important as the Emperor, as they were known commonly as the “shield of the Emperor”. It may sound absurd that some textile would convey magical protective properties or luck, just as Western soldiers of Catholic faith might wear a St. Christopher medallion to connect them with their religion and community, so would Japanese soldiers carry the flag on their person to reaffirm their commitment to the nation and the Emperor. Soldiers will believe in anything if it helps them survive and conduct their duty honorably in even the slightest amount.

As World War II progressed, and Japan lost more and more ground in the Pacific to the Allies, the ability of the Japanese Navy to logistically support, refit and rearm or reinforce island garrisons degraded immensely. After the battle of Guadalcanal (August 1942-January 1943), Japanese commanders were unable to recover and return fallen soldiers and their effects to the Japanese home islands despite direct orders to do so. As Akira Nishimura write: “A document entitled, “The Memorandum of Sand of the Fallen Soldiers’ Spirit”, was issued in March 1943 by the colonel of the 29th Foot Regiment. This officer, who had been engaged in the battle of Guadalcanal, was responsible for sending home the sand from the beach where the soldiers had died. According to the memorandum, the survivors tried to recover and repatriate the remains (i.e., dead bodies, ashes, or at least hair), but were unsuccessful. Instead, they held funeral ceremonies at the exact place of death and gathered “the coral sand on the beautiful beach on the island”.’ The sand, representing the dead soldiers’ spirits, could be returned home to Japan, thus enabling the souls to be reunited with the parents through this material. After the ritual, the grains of sand were distributed and divided according to the number of the dead.”<sup>8</sup>

Japanese high command believed that performing funerary rites with objects associated with soldiers

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7 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

8 Akira Nishimura – Battlefield Pilgrimage and Performative Memory: Contained Souls of Soldiers in Sites, Ashes, and Buddha Statues, Memory Connection Vol. 1 No. 1, 2011 p303-311 9p

would suffice, to allow the spirits of the dead to return to their families. Many families did not accept the Japanese Government's explanation as to why there was no body, and just a pile of sand representing their loved one. Scoops of sand from the Solomon Islands were impersonal. They had no intangible, personal connection with the deceased and their family. “Japanese cultural anthropologist, Emiko Namihira, identified the unconventional nature of this practice. Regarded as the remains of the dead, the sand was put into funeral urns or boxes. The surviving comrades and the bereaved had no other choice but to deal with the sand as if it had been no less than the dead bodies. This deceptive practice was later discontinued and replaced by a more systematic response when it was revealed that it was sand contained in the urns representing the spirits of the deceased rather than the soldiers’ actual ashes. The Vice-Minister of the Army discussing “the affair to repatriate the remains of the dead engaged in the Battle of Guadalcanal”, said that: “The ashes would not always be sent back... The dead soul, however, would certainly come back home. We repatriate the spirit to the base and deliver it to the bereaved. Therefore, it is necessary for them not to think the ashes are in the funeral urns but to understand that it is the spirits that are contained there.” It seems unlikely that all bereaved families were persuaded by such rhetoric, as a number of them (as well as surviving comrades) visited former battle sites and recovered remains following the war.”<sup>9</sup> If the soldier’s bodies, and their possessions including the Good Luck Flags never returned to Japan, where did they end up? Either they were destroyed along with the body or in the hands of the enemy.

The Geneva Conventions regarding the rules of warfare classify different types of items in regards to captured objects from the enemy. Captured “war booty” can be classified as: state-owned property such as vehicles, issued weapons, infrastructure; issued or personal items that maybe considered weapons or hold military intelligence value such as maps, messages or orders; and personal or private possessions of the soldier such as wallets, letters, photographs and clothing. A 1956 US

Army manual written on the basis of the 1929 and 1949 Geneva Conventions regarding “war booty”

<sup>9</sup> Akira Nishimura – Battlefield Pilgrimage and Performative Memory: Contained Souls of Soldiers in Sites, Ashes, and Buddha Statues, Memory Connection Vol. 1 No. 1, 2011 p303-311 9p

states: “All enemy public movable property captured or found on a battlefield becomes the property of the capturing State ... Enemy private movable property, other than arms, military papers, horses, and the like captured or found on a battlefield, may be appropriated only to the extent that such taking is permissible in occupied areas.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, if a soldier captures or finds equipment or objects in war that were the opposing force's national property, such as issued items and weapons, they must be turned over to superior officers, because they default to the supervision of the Government. The manual continues to discuss personal, private items: “All effects and articles of personal use, except arms, horses, military equipment and military documents, shall remain in the possession of prisoners of war, likewise their metal helmets and gas masks and like articles issued for personal protection. Effects and articles used for their clothing or feeding shall likewise remain in their possession, even if such effects and articles belong to their regular military equipment.”<sup>11</sup> So if the object is not a weapon, and does not hold value towards military intelligence, the POW or deceased has every right under law to hold on to their personal possessions. Therefore according to these regulations, state-owned objects go to the capturing state, while, personal, non-weapon items remain on the prisoner or the dead. No objects were to become the souvenirs of the triumphant. Throughout the Pacific campaign Allied soldiers disregarded or were ambivalent to such rules, with looting endemic in all areas of conflict. Simon Harrison recounts the complete disregard for the respect of the enemy's possessions. “An American Marine in the Pacific War [Eugene Sledge] recalls in his memoirs the practice of ‘field stripping’, in which a variety of objects were routinely taken from the enemy dead for use as ‘souvenirs’. He called field stripping a ‘ritual’, and likened it to scalping as an act of retribution, degradation, and power (Sledge 1981: 118-20). In field stripping enemy bodies, different categories of war souvenir seem to have been recognized. One consisted of items such as weapons, helmets, canteens, and military insignia removed from enemy uniforms. They were not considered the property of the soldier who carried them, and did not usually identify him individually. The military regulations of some armed forces seem to

<sup>10</sup> Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949, Article 18, paras 1 and 3.

<sup>11</sup> Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949, Article 18, paras 1 and 3.

permit their personnel to use anonymous items of this sort as war souvenirs. Second were objects that personally identified their possessors. In this category were military identification tags and pay books, and in the Japanese case, swords, which each carried a tag identifying the person it was issued to. Finally, there were personal items, and especially those which concerned the owners' family relationships. In this category were family photographs, personal letters, wallets, diaries and bank account books – objects that any person might carry, and which relate to his or her private identity as a human being. International law defines the unauthorized taking of personal belongings of this sort from prisoners of war, or from the bodies of the dead, as looting or robbery.”<sup>12</sup> So with this account, where do Good Luck Flags fall under? Each flag would have had the soldier's name written prominently upon it as well as evidence to show where they came from, these items can clearly identify an individual soldier and by law, should have remained with the soldier and not looted.

The Allied culture at the time however developed a great interest in 'Japanese memorabilia' and a sort of black market developed, even soldiers with little interest in the items themselves would scavenge or loot from the dead as it was an effective way to augment one's income. “Those who collected them did so not only for their own use as souvenirs, but also to barter or sell, mostly to rear-echelon service troops, among whom there was a strong demand for such objects in return for luxuries such as beer or whisky. As a result, only a minority of servicemen returned from the Pacific with mementos taken from bodies of soldiers whom they had personally killed, even though some passed off their war souvenirs as personal kill trophies back home. Many souvenirs were received as gifts, bought, won in card games, or acquired in a similar way from other personnel, and had perhaps changed hands several times.”<sup>13</sup> These objects passing multiple people before reaching the final “owner” are nearly impossible to trace back to where it was originally looted from and from whom. Nearly every Japanese soldier carried one, and they were small and easily concealable. A soldier did

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12 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

13 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

not have to worry about a superior confiscating the item, like swords, often for their own selfish intent, and could safely ship them back home in luggage or barter for luxury items with them in the rear. In many cases, all information about the life or fate of an individual has been lost to time, with the exception of his flag. Despite the fact that nearly all of these flags remain in the hands of WWII veterans of the Allied nations, because of the unique aspect of Good Luck Flags having the soldier's name prominently displayed on each flag, with research and due diligence it is quite possible to discover their origins and even the surviving family's whereabouts.

Typically in Japanese funeral rituals, family members will incorporate objects with deep personal meaning or connection to the deceased. Praying with the objects allows the spirit of the dead to find their way back home. Due to the less than satisfactory practices regarding the return of war dead in World War II many families still felt or believed the spirits of their relatives were still trapped on a battlefield overseas. By 1964, with the economic growth of Japan and the regional development of the Pacific islands in question, overseas travel became popular, and one out of one thousand Japanese citizens took trips abroad at this time. In addition, the Japan Confederation of Promoting Recovery of Remains Organizations was established in 1972 this trend. This body liaised with individuals and groups representing bereaved families, deceased soldiers' comrades, and youth volunteers.<sup>14</sup> Relatives had a strong enough desire to try and find the battlefield sites where their relatives died, and be able to properly perform a funerary ritual in order to allow the spirit to rest and return home to Japan. This desire to find resolution will drive many to find anything personally associated with the deceased in order to perform these funerary rites.

Interestingly, the purpose and use of these flags has changed over the years as they find themselves in different cultures and environments. As Kopytoff stated, that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use. The biography of a car in Africa wealth of cultural data: The way it was bought, used,

<sup>14</sup> Akira Nishimura – Battlefield Pilgrimage and Performative Memory: Contained Souls of Soldiers in Sites, Ashes, and Buddha Statues, Memory Connection Vol. 1 No. 1, 2011 p303-311 9p

maintained and sold and disposed of paints a unique picture of the culture in that region. All of these details would reveal an entirely different biography from that of a middle-class American, or Navajo, or French peasant car.”<sup>15</sup> These flags were originally in Imperial Japanese culture symbols of well wishes and good luck charms. Then in the possession of Allied veterans at those who purchased them, merely trophies from a war. However many veterans in old age feel compelled to return the flags to the surviving family members of the fallen soldier. These are not isolated cases. “In 2000, the Japanese Embassy in Washington reported that it was being contacted about once a week by American veterans or their kin hoping to return swords, flags, and other artefacts to families in Japan, with the items being successfully returned in about half of these cases. The Japanese Consulate General in New York received such requests about once a month in 2004.”<sup>16</sup> What is more interesting however is what these flags represent to the repatriated families and how they have used them in a new context. After being returned, many families use the flag as a primary object in funerary rights in allowing the spirits of the war dead to finally return home. Fitting the NAGPRA definition, they have become *associated funerary objects*. Harrison notes, “The reasons why servicemen collected these war trophies in the first place, and why many eventually sought to return them, and the emotive power of the objects when returned, all had to do with their capacity to evoke the physical presence of the persons who had once carried them. For their surviving kin, such items were surrogate bodies or body parts, exactly as they were for the Allied servicemen who took them as battlefield trophies during the war. In particular, the dead soldiers’ relatives were finally able to hold memorial services using the returned war souvenirs as replacements for the missing body, or rather as if these artefacts were the remains. For the purposes of the funerary ceremonies, having one of the personal belongings of the soldier was, in the words of one Japanese observer, ‘just like having a piece of his body’.”<sup>17</sup> These sentiments do blur the idea between

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15 Igor Kopytoff – *The Social life of things – Commodities in cultural perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p67

16 Simon Harrison – *War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead*, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

17 Simon Harrison – *War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead*, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p



merely an object, and human remains. Although Harrison does argue the blurring of the lines between these boundaries and definitions, as many, if not most soldiers died with the flags on their person, “Soldiers who collected enemy possessions as combat trophies, and the surviving kin of the original owners, to whom these artefacts return as mourning or funerary objects, seem to have shared very similar assumptions about the relation between persons and things: namely that the remains of the dead, and memorial objects associated with the dead, are not entirely separable or, more broadly, that the body does not have precise boundaries.”<sup>18</sup> The concept of Good Luck Flags being considered human remains is an important argument to have, especially in relation to how it would be treated under NAGRPA, and regarding the sale of such objects, it is beyond the scope of my argument.

When discussing the concept and idea of “cultural heritage” one must ask what makes an object qualify as “heritage”? Why do we as a culture respect, value and protect some inanimate objects over others, willingly letting those that do not meet the standard, rot and degrade to nothingness? Igor Kopytoff argues that objects have lives, biographies of their own, just as people do. They even are subjected to the same cultural scrutiny of conforming to societal norms and ideals. “One may present an actual biography, or one may construct a typical biographical model from randomly assembled biographical data, as one does in the standard Life Cycle chapter in a general ethnography. A more theoretically aware biographical model is rather more demanding. It is based on a reasonable number of actual life histories. It presents the range of biographical possibilities that the society in question offers and examines the manner in which these possibilities are realized in the life stories of various categories of people. And it examines idealized biographies that are considered to be desirable models in the society and the way real-life departures from the models are perceived. As Margaret Mead remarked, one way to understand a culture is to see what sort of biography it regards as embodying a successful social career. Clearly, what is seen as a well-lived life in an African society is different in outline from what would be pronounced as a well-lived life along the Ganges, or in Brittany, or among

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<sup>18</sup> Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, December 2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790, 17p

the Eskimos. It seems to me that we can profitably ask the same range and kinds of cultural questions to arrive at biographies of things.”<sup>19</sup> Those objects that best portray or represent tend to be identified as uniquely qualified to be considered cultural heritage for a given people. However as Kopytoff has stated, that same object may have a completely different life, or biography if it finds itself in another culture. An object could be considered “sacred” in one culture and in another seen as little more than a paperweight, or a worthless trinket. It is in these instances where objects find themselves in cultures that have no reverence or respect for said object, when the people of the culture it resides in have no connection to it and their own identity, it is morally imperative such objects are returned to the culture where it has the most meaning and significance. UNESCO defines cultural heritage as “the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.”<sup>20</sup> They go on to argue the importance of such objects “...demonstrates recognition of the necessity of the past and of the things that tell its story. Preserved objects also validate memories...” Although when we think of cultural heritage and, 'artefacts' the image of ancient Greek or Roman ruins, vases, and coins, flags, especially ones like Good Luck Flags, though prone to deterioration, easily fall into that definition. NAGPRA, although a federal law dealing specifically with Native American cultural heritage can be applied here in a general sense as well.

Section two of NAGPRA outlines terminology used such as *Cultural Affiliation*; “is a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe and an identifiable earlier group.

*Cultural items* refers to human remains (or more respectfully, Native ancestors). *Associated funerary objects* are objects that, as a part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture, are reasonably believed to have been placed with individual human remains either at the time of death or later. Both the human remains and associated funerary objects are presently in the possession or control of a federal agency or

19 Igor Kopytoff – The Social life of things – Commodities in cultural perspective, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p66  
20 UNESCO Convention of 1970

museum. They include objects made for burial purposes or those made to contain human remains. *Unassociated funerary objects* are different from associated funerary objects because the human remains are not in the possession or control of a federal agency or museum. The objects can be identified by a “preponderance of the evidence” as related to specific individuals or families or to known human remains, or as having been removed from a specific burial site of an individual culturally affiliated with a particular Indian tribe. *Sacred objects* are specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present-day adherents.”<sup>21</sup> For the sake of argument, imagine references to Native Americans being replaced with “Japanese” or more broadly “Culture of a foreign belligerent”.

According to these definitions, *Yosegaki Hinomaru* could potentially be classified as any of these terms. As stated earlier, the initial looting of these flags was not only unethical but unlawful under Geneva Conventions as well as US military regulations. This fact nullifies any 'right' someone may claim to have ownership on such objects, including museums and their donors. As many veterans nearing the end of their lives hope to give these objects back to Japan, others, or their next of kin donate these objects to museums and local historical societies as they believe those institutions would be best suited to handle and care for the objects. Institutions should follow UNESCO and possibly NAGPRA guidelines in care and documentation of Good Luck Flags if found in their collections, not out of a legal imperative, but as a good ethical basis and understanding. Also institutions should refrain from accepting such objects with significant cultural heritage as gifts or donations unless with the intent on conserving and repatriation of said objects. Following NAGPRA guidelines, as noted in section 5: “Each Federal agency and each museum which has possession or control over holdings or collections of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects shall compile an inventory of such items and, to the extent possible based on information possessed by such museum or Federal agency, identify the geographical and cultural affiliation of such item.”<sup>22</sup> If the institution has

21 Evan Hawkins – Breaking down the sections of NAGPRA law, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Dec 1, 2015

22 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990

the financial or academic means of researching and discovering the identity of the soldier personally associated with the flag and their next of kin or community, then section 7 of NAGPRA would most likely serve as clear guidelines. “(a)(1) If, pursuant to section 5 of this Act [25 U.S.C. 3003], the cultural affiliation of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects with a particular Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization is established, then the Federal agency or museum, upon the request of a known lineal descendant of the Native American or of the tribe or organization and pursuant to subsections (b) and (e) of this section, shall expeditiously return such remains and associated funerary objects.... (3) The return of cultural items covered by this Act shall be in consultation with the requesting lineal descendant or tribe or organization to determine the place and manner of delivery of such items.”<sup>23</sup> In essence, if the museum or institution has the means and has identified the descendants, then they should do everything in their power to repatriate the object. As said before, these flags are unique with the vast amounts of information directly written into the fabric. An individual cannot falsify or destroy information regarding to the original provenance of these flags which make them especially suited to be repatriated.

However there are no current legal codes, such as the 2016 HEAR Act (Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery Act), demanding institutions or individuals take such actions and immediately inventory and report findings of such objects in their collections. Museums must follow more ethical or moral codes when regarding these objects. Thus I will be proposing a set of guidelines or recommendations based off the UNESCO and NAGPRA resolutions and codes that all participating institutions could implement. Participating in such a project could also make them available to research regarding the identification of their *Yosegaki Hinomaru* through sharing information or resources between participating institutions, though this could be applied to a variety of culturally sensitive objects, for this particular project I will focus on the Good Luck Flags. Institutions have an obligation to the donors, as they did not expect the objects to just be “given away”. Although such objects never have

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23 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990

proper provenance as they were nearly all unlawfully looted, some museums do not have the resources to conduct sufficient research and return such objects. Also some museums such as the National World War II Museum, these objects would fit perfectly within their mission and scope. In these cases preservation and care would be the next best course of action. However repatriation of these objects would be ideal and if enough institutions could sign up and effectively identify and return such flags, maybe individuals or other museums with such flags would donate specifically to affiliated museums knowing the flags would end up in the right person's hands, and the spirits of those soldiers can finally return home.

### Chapter 3 – Project Proposal

Regarding war loot from the Pacific Theater of World War II and its cultural significance to Japanese culture, scholars generally agree on several points. As demonstrated in previous chapters, scholars agree that many of the culturally specific items such as good luck flags and belts are unique to Japanese society and cultural practices and existed for only a specific era in Japanese history, that nearly all of such objects are now in the possession of Allied soldiers and their next-of-kin in their respective nations, and that many of these objects have now changed in their function and have come to represent the fallen or missing soldier in the eyes of their families. Since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, veterans of WWII who served in the Pacific Theater have increasingly shown interest in

returning looted objects in their possession. In 2000, the Japanese Embassy in Washington reported that it was being contacted about once a week by American veterans or their kin hoping to return swords, flags, and other artefacts to families in Japan, with the items being successfully returned in about half of these cases. The Japanese Consulate General in New York received such requests about once a month in 2004. The section of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare dealing with veterans' affairs has reported a growing number of such enquiries over the years, with over 260 received in the fiscal year 2002. It estimated that it was able that year to locate the original owners' next of kin and arrange the return of artefacts to them in ninety or a hundred of these cases. My own sample of cases suggests that many artefacts are repatriated privately through personal contacts. In the light of this, it is possible that attempts to repatriate the personal effects of perhaps two hundred Japanese soldiers are being currently made each year through official and unofficial means."<sup>24</sup> As they near the end of their lives many veterans on their own initiative hope to return looted items, most commonly the good luck flags, to the 'rightful' Japanese family. "Several other veterans are reported as saying that they came to feel that it was time, after half a century, to 'put the past to rest', or to 'put/lay it aside', rather than continue to 'carry it around with them'. One 83 year-old veteran, returning a Japanese sword in 2000, told a local newspaper: 'It's very important to me ... At my age, I thought I needed to get this done, to return it to its rightful owners. I'm thinking about the family'. He decided to return the sword after meeting two Japanese students on a golf course. He told them about his war souvenir, went home and brought it to them, and they read him the owner's name on a tag on the handle. Afterwards, he went home, looked at the sword and said to himself, 'You have to get it back to the family'. Some veterans disapproved of his decision to send the sword back to Japan. 'They don't think they deserve to have it back ... But it's been over fifty years. People should put hatred aside' (A.S.)."<sup>25</sup> In more recent years news stories featured in local newspapers have become prevalent

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24 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Dec 2008, Vol. 14, Issue 4, p774-790, 17p, p776

25 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Dec 2008, Vol. 14, Issue 4, p774-790, 17p, p776

detailing an individual veteran and his conclusion of returning a looted item with significant cultural context to Japan. “On Friday, the Marine Corps veteran from Aurora, Ill., completed a pilgrimage to return it to Japan, along with several other objects taken from Pacific battlefields. The still-sprightly 92-year-old, who served with the 4th Marine Division during World War II, said he decided to give back the red and white banner after hearing about another veteran who returned a war trophy. “I thought it was a real nifty idea,” Udstad said. “I knew it would do the family (of the flag’s original owner) a world of good compared to what it was doing for me.” Helped by members of his Mormon church, Udstad discovered that Japanese characters on the flag referred to the village of Tago in Shizuoka Prefecture. Officials there are still searching for the family of the fallen soldier, but were eager to receive the flag on their behalf. A mob of Japanese reporters and officials were waiting for Udstad — who got a free ride to Japan courtesy of American Airlines — when he arrived at the Shizuoka Prefectural Office to hand back the flag along with a notebook, hat, official papers and family photographs taken from Japanese troops on the island of Saipan...”<sup>26</sup> Udstad was wise in including everything he had in relation to the flag, to add context to the objects and further help tell the story of the objects and their owner. The mere reaction by the local governments and media attention displays the cultural significance of these objects even from a time period most Japanese wish to forget. Harrison points out that many of these veterans have similar stories and motivations, yet all came to the conclusion to return such items on their own, and not spurred on by any private or public interest group. “These cases suggest that efforts to give back the personal effects of enemy dead reflect decisions on the part of individuals and families largely unaware of one another. In other words, most of the protagonists are people who have responded similarly to similar life-events with no consciousness of comprising an interest group of some kind. Some of them have sought publicity in the hope of encouraging other veterans to follow their example. Others do not want publicity and do not wish to be identified. The authors of many of the media reports, too, write as if the events they describe

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26 Seth Robson – Japanese WWII flag, taken as war trophy returns in friendship, Stars and Stripes, Dec 11, 2013

were unique cases, unaware that they form part of a larger and more widespread pattern.”<sup>27</sup>

Outside of the self-motivated World War II veterans there is a non-profit organization called “Obon Society.” Founded by Rex and Keiko Ziak, the society specializes in the restitution of Japanese *Yosegaki Hinomaru*. Operating in Oregon, they describe themselves as “a humanitarian movement that heals hearts and connects broken families. We accomplish this by returning personal family heirlooms to their relatives.”<sup>28</sup> A non-profit organization, with on-staff scholars that can identify and interpret donated flags, and with international connections in American and Japanese government agencies they work to find and return donated flags to the rightful families to the best of their abilities. They understand that most if not all veterans in possession of these objects do not have the means either academic or financial to return these flags on their own, Obon Society takes all of the 'heavy lifting' and only asks that the donor mail the objects to them and they will do the rest until the respective families are found, contacted and the flag is restituted, all while keeping the donor informed. As of 2017 the Obon Society successfully returns on average, a flag every 3 days, and have returned over 200 in total. However they have nearly a thousand in their possession awaiting research with the biggest obstacle being reliable funding.<sup>29</sup> I believe they have a worthwhile mission and have been effective at achieving their goals.

Besides individual veterans, the other common possessor of such cultural objects are museums and historical societies. In many anecdotes of veterans wishing to return such objects, they do not know who to contact or have died and passed the objects onto their next-of-kin.

“Shortly after one veteran died in 1996, his children and grandchildren were sorting through his belongings and came across a familiar object – an old gift box containing a Japanese flag. A few times during the past fifty years, he had wiped the dust from the box, carefully removed the flag, and explained that it was signed by the family and friends of a Japanese soldier who had carried it off to war. Brown stains on it were the soldier’s blood. J.S., his son, recalled: ‘He said, “Do you see that [blood]? You know what that is? “He would explain it, but not in gruesome terms ... It was never held

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27 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Dec 2008, Vol. 14, Issue 4, p774-790, 17p, p776

28 Obon Society – What We Do, <http://obonsociety.org/what-we-do/>

29 Kimi Robinson – Obon Society works to heal World War II wounds by returning wartime flags, but a labor of love has a cost”, Japan Times, Aug 01, 2018



up as a trophy of war or anything like that'. His children and grandchildren decided to try to repatriate the flag because they felt he would have wanted them to do so."<sup>30</sup>

It can be deduced many of these flags end up thrown out or donated to museums and related institutions as they are seen as to have the most trust in relation to "knowing what to do with such objects," either in terms of physical care and preservation, or the expertise to interpret the flag and know what is best for the flag. Despite the fact many such flags are known to be in the permanent collections of museums, we do not hear of any news stories or peer-reviewed papers referencing such institutions publicizing such information or its repatriation to Japan. Therefore it is appropriate to create guidelines for museums and related institutions regarding the identification, and proper care of these culturally significant objects. Implementing and disseminating such guidelines would potentially have the following impacts:

- 1) Giving closure to the families of Japanese war dead.
- 2) Helping organize and maintain collections in museums and related institutions.
- 3) Managing the sale and trafficking of culturally sensitive objects.
- 4) Establishing or improving relationships between both domestic and international institutions and governments.

Although these guidelines could be useful or be applicable to other objects regarding cultural heritage and war looting, I am focusing on the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* as they are the most common kind of war loot from the Second World War. Because they intrinsically contain provenance information the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* are somewhat easier to retribute. As these objects are almost invariably illegally looted from war dead, donated or flags found in the collections of museums should be publicized and every reasonable effort made to return such objects. However, some institutions may have flags with explicit donor restrictions preventing any sort of deaccession, or the flag may fit perfectly into a

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30 Simon Harrison – War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead, University of Ulster, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Dec 2008, Vol. 14, Issue 4, p774-790, 17p, p776

museum's mission, such as the National World War II Museum, located in New Orleans, LA. These kinds of institutions may want to maintain and quite possibly display such objects in their collection.

Therefore the goals for implementing a project to facilitate the care and return of war loot follows:

- 1) Increase the awareness of good luck flags and their significance in museum professionals and institutions
- 2) Connect institutions with the Obon Society and help facilitate the care and restitution of good luck flags.
- 3) Raise awareness of the Obon Society and its mission, organize ways to raise money for the organization.

The initial hurdle one must overcome for this project is the general lack of awareness and knowledge regarding good luck flags. Institutions, especially smaller ones, may not be aware of such flags in their collections. In a direct method, contacting institutions that traditionally have frequent contact with military veterans such as local veteran museums, or other military related institutions. Is a first step. These would be the most likely to have such objects in their collections as veterans and next-of-kin no longer wishing to hold onto such flags would donate them to an institution believed to be well equipped to care for the objects. To throw the net further, launching a social media campaign to increase either public awareness or just museum professionals to the significance of these objects. Museum professionals would be much more likely to spot and identify such flags and then take the necessary steps on what to do with it specific to one's own museum if they were aware of the objects and could recognize them. This would also increase the likelihood of proper care and maintenance of these flags, as after over 80 years, these silk-based textiles are incredibly fragile. Public awareness would also help in two ways. First it would encourage individuals who happen to possess a flag to donate it to a museum or directly donate it to the Obon Society. Since 2000, most inquiries in attempts to return such flags are directed at an overwhelmed Japanese consulates throughout the United States

and respective countries. Increased public awareness would increase the rate of restituted items and possibly add volunteers and financial donors. Such awareness would also most likely clamp down on the rampant sale and trafficking of good luck flags throughout the United States. Anyone could casually search the internet for online auctions of Japanese battle flags and be inundated with dozens of ads for online auctions, often with the seller having no working knowledge of the flags outside of its interest in World War II collectors. Taken to an extreme example, legislation could possibly be passed outlawing the sale of such war looted objects.

Disseminating awareness and the mission of the Obon Society at Museum conferences and symposiums would also be an effective strategy. In a short amount of time and with minimal resources, we could educate hundreds of museum professionals from around the nation on how to identify the flags, care for them, and their cultural significance. Conference and symposium presentations could convey the need to return such objects and introduce the Obon Society. As funding is one of the biggest issues for the Obon Society, this would not only facilitate donations to the Society, such presentations would also build a collaborative relationship between the Society and museum professionals with backgrounds in Japanese linguistics or history, potentially multiplying the ability of Obon Society to research and return flags to the original owners' families.

Implementation of such a project would have an impact on many individuals and organizations, especially the families of Japanese War dead. As the rate of restitution of good luck flags and other culturally sensitive looted items are returned, more and more families are able to find closure from a war over 75 years ago. It also could have an indirect impact of creating new relationships with people in Japan and United States, fostering future cooperation. It would also help veterans and their families find closure of their own. By helping veterans seeking solace or peace, or their families wanting to honor their passed loved ones by getting these flags to where they belong.

Much in the same way with Japanese families, this allows people to honor the dead and foster relationships with local museums and related institutions. VFW or other veteran-centered organizations

could possibly team up with local institutions and facilitate donations or the return of flags. Often these types of stories of long lost items finally returning to a family are feel-good stories the media loves to cover. Museums and institutions involved in these stories are bound to receive good publicity, and increased trust in the public. This in turn could possibly increase interest, memberships, or donations. The museum community on a whole would benefit from increased cooperation and communication between organizations, in particular smaller museums with limited resources could potentially team up with larger museums. Finally cultural heritage-focused bodies or laws such as UNESCO and NAGPRA would possibly be involved. War loot with specific cultural heritage and significance would easily fall into the realm of these entities monitor or manage.

In order to achieve these goals such a project would need a project manager. The Project Manager would supervise volunteers, interns or employees involved. They would present at symposiums or conferences, and facilitate the networking and cooperation of institutions with the Obon Society or relevant government body. A communications manager, who would be in charge of public dissemination of related information via social media and other outlets. This person could be a part-time employee or intern with excellent communication and social media skills. If a central or specific institution should be the flagship for such a project, I would suggest a museum with ample resources and a mission related to such objects, such as the National WWII Museum, or even the Obon Society themselves. They too are a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization and qualify many of the same grants that museums do. These institutions or Obon Society themselves could apply for grants to help fund the costs of such a program. Thus, the wages needed for personnel as well as travel costs for conferences, as well as printing or other physical publication related to the project would be necessary.

Such a program if implemented would have a significant impact on the care and return of Japanese good-luck flags, as well as other culturally significant war looted items. In the future it could facilitate the identification and return of other looted items with much less provenance information to go by. This would also stymie the market for Japanese war loot. Most importantly of all it would help

families of both allied veterans, and that of Japanese war dead find some sense of peace.

#### Chapter 4 – Summary and Conclusions

Although the subject of World War II is one of the most researched and argued eras in modern history, especially in the United States, it was shocking to learn how little Japanese Yosegaki Hinomaru were discussed or covered in academia, and only occasionally touched upon in feel good stories in newspapers. The perceived lack of academic authority on the subject was disconcerting yet motivated me to dig deeper as it was in my own eyes an untapped vein of significant historical and cultural relevance. One of the most common cultural artifacts from the World War II were unknown to myself and many other, and stumbling upon one in a small collection of a historical society inspired me to look into their history and significance related to the War and Japanese culture.

In researching this topic I stumbled upon a massive market for these objects, casually bought and sold on online auction sites throughout the United States. As the complete lack of awareness and understanding of the flags in question there are no current regulations or restrictions on the sale of such

objects, despite their inherent lack of provenance. Outside of programs or initiatives to build awareness for these flags and related items in the museum community, I felt a broader reach, possibly to academic spheres or universities and local governments would be needed in the future. As veterans in possession of these objects pass away and bequeath them to relatives or institutions, with little context or knowledge surrounding these flags, I fear most will only see the financial value of these objects. Much like looters digging up artifacts to sell on the black market, when these flags are passed on to others without the context or the personal stories attached to them, for example how did the veteran come across the object, we lose the historical context surrounding the flag, much like how an object loses the context of the surrounding geological strata at a given archaeological site that could provide immense information in relation to the object. I fear these objects will only become more and more prevalent on such auction sites and be viewed as merely “WWII collectibles”

Time is also a factor as many children of the war dead themselves are elderly and have only a limited time to find these people before they too pass away. Finding family members with personal, direct relations to Japanese war dead would have the greatest impact in healing the wounds of that terrible war as well as give closure to the family, and bring American and Japanese communities and institutions together. However eventually we will only have descendants or local municipalities acting as proxy to be custodians of the restituted objects.

Also the research and focus on Japanese Yosegaki Hinomaru could easily be expanded to include other personal items of war dead, such as Seninburi, or “Thousand-Stitch Belt” as they have a similar function to the flags, albeit less personalized. They are similar in rarity to the flags and would also have a similar effect upon Japanese families or communities if returned as well. With time, interest and resources, one could go even further and include related items from other cultures or armies, even facilitating the return of objects related to American war dead currently residing overseas.

Such efforts are worthy in my opinion, returning such objects allows families to find closure as well as improving awareness and education regarding objects in a wartime environment, as well as

building international rapport and mutual respect. Often afterwards a soldier's battle is far from over, now having to battle new foes such as reintegration into 'civil' society as well as psychological and moral injuries. After wars, soldiers often have immense respect for those they fought against on the battlefield. Despite being once mortal enemies, they are the only ones who truly can understand and relate to each other's experiences. They fought, bled and died together and put the war and hatred behind them. Using these objects as tools to help facilitate healing, education, reinforce the idea that we have much more in common than what we do not in my opinion the most honorable course of action one can take regarding battlefield mementos. Not symbols of supremacy or trophies of dominance over our neighbors.

#### Appendix – Annotated Bibliography

**Michael A. Bortner – Imperial Japanese Good Luck Flags and One-Thousand Stitch Belts  
Schiffer Military Books, 2008 320p**

Primarily a picture book of many different variations and examples of flags and belts from Japanese soldiers in WWII. Also provides a rudimentary history regarding the origin of these practices. However this author is a dentist by trade and not an academic expert on the subject, more of a serious hobbyist, though seems to be the most comprehensive attempt at this esoteric subject matter.

**Fiona Candlin – Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums  
2016, Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, pg. 78-79**

This chapter centers on a small, grassroots museum hidden away in Belfast where one man has collected objects associated with “The Troubles” that plagued Northern Ireland for three decades. It talks about one incident where the museum became a neutral ground where parties from both sides of the conflict could talk and reminisce about those days, and how the feelings between the belligerents have changed, they find more in common through shared experiences than differences in identity or ideology. It could be a way of showing how veterans can once again see their opponents as humans, as well as letting go of animosities of the past, even using 'divisive' museum objects such as an RPG, as a way to connect.

**Simon Harrison - War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead**

**University of Ulster, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Dec2008, Vol. 14 Issue 4, p774-790. 17p.**

Discusses many different individual case studies (55) in which American service members return

objects to next of kin of fallen Japanese soldiers. How the meaning of looted objects change over time for the victors/looters and their motivations as to restitution the objects. Gives ample incidences of individuals take it upon themselves, not through an institution to find the 'rightful' (in their own mind) owners of the objects, also touches on the concept that the object has a piece of the fallen soldier instilled within, and the boundaries between the dead body and the personal effects are blurred.

**Simon Harrison – Skull trophies of the Pacific War: transgressive objects of remembrance**  
**University of Ulster, Coleraine Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Dec 2006, Vol. 12 Issue 4, p817-836. 20p.**

Focuses on the practice of taking human remains as trophies, mainly Australian, British and American soldiers during WWII and Vietnam. How this practice is common throughout human history in societies where big game hunting is important and a display of masculinity. As well as when the enemy is seen as “less than human”. Harrison details this phenomenon was not of isolated incidents, but endemic throughout American society as people proudly sought out skulls, teeth and bones to send home as souvenirs. (Though I argue almost all conflicts portray the enemy in such light.) Human remains are against the Geneva Conventions Laws of War, and consideration regarding human remains are beyond the scope of my project.

**Igor Kopytoff – The social life of things – Commodities in cultural perspective**  
**Cambridge University Press, 1986 p64-91 28p.**

Discusses how objects, like people have a biography and the same questions that apply to people such as, what is considered the ideal life, the ideal person in a culture?, can be said about cultural objects as well. Also how if said object is used in a different culture, how is its role changed?

Applies to the flags as their significance and meaning in Japanese culture is completely different when held in American culture. From something being the physical representation of the community supporting their soldiers in time of war, to being merely a souvenir, trophy or conversation starter at parties for Americans.

**Akira Nishimura – Battlefield Pilgrimage and Performative Memory: Contained Souls of Soldiers in Sites, Ashes, and Buddha Statues**  
**Memory Connection Vol. 1, Number 1, 2011 p303-311 9p.**

Discusses how relatives of those who died in WWII are left unsatisfied with the government's handling of their remains, and how on their own initiative travel to WWII battlefields in order to find where they fell and allow their spirits to rest. Shows how personal objects with a connection to the dead are instrumental in funeral rituals. This is important in proving that flags can be used as funerary objects and needs to be treated as such, as well as falling under cultural heritage practices regarding funerary objects.

**Susan H. Libby – War, peace and cultural heritage: How two colleges repatriated objects taken from Okinawa after the Second World War.**

**Art, Antiquity & Law; Jul2015, Vol. 20 Issue 2, p125-132, 8p**

Details two colleges in the US which held objects looted from the battlefields of WWII, one a private college and the other a military institution. Each had very different responses to calls to return such



objects and ran different protocols in the process of repatriation. This is important as although not museums, they are some of the few examples of institutions returning objects and following protocols (or made up protocols on the fly like Rollins College. The Military Institute followed rigid, in place rules regarding cultural heritage objects set down from the government. Also noteworthy was the donor's wishes in regards to both objects as one was deceased at the time of controversy, and the other still living and was against repatriation. This helps with discussing the need to respect donor's wishes when looking at possible deaccession/repatriation of objects within a collection.

**Folarin Shyllon – The rise of negotiation (ADR) in restitution, return and repatriation of cultural property: Moral pressure and power pressure.**

**Art, Antiquity & Law; Jul2017, Vol. 22 Issue 2, p130-142, 13p**

Discusses how incredibly expensive and drawn out legal cases regarding cultural heritage rights (Just look at the Elgin Marbles dispute) and how less intense arbitration or mediation has become more common, using UNESCO 1970 and other landmark conventions as a basis for procedure. Uses examples how Peru switched tactics from a criminal lawsuit directed at Yale University to a public protest/shaming strategy in which Yale immediately responded and began talks. Both parties were able to compromise and agree to allow Yale access and objects restituted to Peru. Also uses Turkey as an example how a state takes a much more ham-fisted approach through intimidation and blackmail to achieve their goals. These examples are of cases regarding cultural history restitution is initiated by the party who has lost their objects, and want them back, unlike previous papers cited where the current holders initiate returns of objects.

**Obon Society**

<http://obonsociety.org/>

Obon society, (formerly OBON2015) is a private organization founded by Rex and Keiko Ziak which specializes in the restitution of Yosegaki. (Japanese Good Luck Flags) They set up as to work with individuals or any private citizen with one in possession and can anonymously donate the flag and the organization will preserve, research and return it to next of kin or the community where it originated. If unable to identify specific next-of-kin, they use local Japanese newspapers to advertise seeking information regarding a specific flag.

**Preservation of Artifacts – National WWII Museum, New Orleans, LA**

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/preservation-artifacts>

Guidelines detailing the threats to preservation and tips on how to preserve memorabilia, including “heirloom textiles” in which these flags would be classified under.

**Yosegaki Hinomaru: The Good Luck Flag**

**The Conservation Center, May 17, 2016**

<http://www.theconservationcenter.com/article/2016/5/16/yosegaki-hinomaru-the-good-luck-flag>

Details the process of art conservators restoring a damaged flag step by step, as well as outlining its historical significance. Noted that the client decided to hold on to the flag until the family of the fallen soldier could be identified. The article is important as it specializes in the conservation, and care of these often brittle flags.

**About the Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery (HEAR) Act  
Commission for Art Recovery**

<http://www.commartrecovery.org/hear-act>

**Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949, Article 18, paras 1 and 3.**

[https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2\\_rul\\_rule49](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule49)

Rules outlining what types of gear held by captured soldiers is allowed to be confiscated, and what is allowed to remain with the captured soldier. This shows that Yosegaki is considered personal affects, and has no military value and therefore *should* remain with the soldier and looting is unlawful.

**Evan Hawkins – Breaking down the sections of NAGPRA LAW  
Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Dec 1, 2015**

<https://centerofthewest.org/2015/12/01/breaking-sections-nagpra-law/>

**Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act – November 16, 1990**

[https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/FHPL\\_NAGPRA.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/FHPL_NAGPRA.pdf)

**Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO, Paris, 1970)**

**Page 19, Articles 7(b) (ii); 13(b,c,d.); 15)**

[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/OPERATIONAL\\_GUIDELINES\\_EN\\_FINAL\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/OPERATIONAL_GUIDELINES_EN_FINAL_FINAL.pdf)

Rules set forth regarding cultural heritage protection and restitution as well as steps to prevent or curb international trafficking of art and archaeological objects.

Gives basis for international legal rights in returning cultural objects though not retroactive before 1970, therefore WWII objects are legally exempt, however still offers a moral guideline for holders of cultural heritage objects.

**UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Definition**

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2>

**United States, *Field Manual 27-10, The Law of Land Warfare*, US Department of the Army, 18 July, 1956, as modified by Change no. 1, 15 July 1976, 59(a) and (b) see also 396.**

[https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2\\_rul\\_rule49](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule49)

US Military rules regarding war looting, outlining what types of looting is allowed and what is deemed unlawful. Has basis in the Geneva conventions.

**Paul Daley – 100 years after the battlefield looting, the Shellal mosaic remains controversial  
The Guardian, Mar 24, 2018**

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2018/mar/25/100-years-after-the->

battlefield-looting-the-shellal-mosaic-remains-controversial

This covers a controversy between two nations and their respective national museums attempts at acquiring or maintaining possession of a specific war trophy; the “Shellal Mosaic”. Here legality over possession of the trophy is not the issue but rights of possession between two competing parties over the 'victory' during WWI. This is one of the few stories focused on institutions and their attempts to KEEP trophies, and how to display them.

**Bert Eljera – War's unfinished business: He'd like to return Japanese flag taken from fallen soldier**

**Los Angeles Times, Nov 19, 1994**

[http://articles.latimes.com/1994-11-19/local/me-64573\\_1\\_dead-japanese-soldier](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-11-19/local/me-64573_1_dead-japanese-soldier)

Another newspaper story detailing one individual's attempt at returning flags he had found or acquired in WWII. Also points out one form of motivation being absolution from guilt of deeds in the conflict.

**Kimi Robinson – Obon Society works to heal World War II wounds by returning wartime flags, but labor of love has a cost**

**Japan Times, August 1, 2018**

[https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/08/01/national/history/obon-society-works-heal-world-war-ii-wounds-returning-wartime-flags-labor-love-cost/#.W\\_6DhPZFwuU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/08/01/national/history/obon-society-works-heal-world-war-ii-wounds-returning-wartime-flags-labor-love-cost/#.W_6DhPZFwuU)

Article stating how many flags the Obon Society has returned as of 2017, and how many they have in their possession currently undergoing research in hopes of finding the families associated with the flags.

**Seth Robson - Japanese WWII flag, taken as a war trophy returns in friendship**

**Stars and Stripes, Dec 11, 2013**

<https://www.stripes.com/news/japanese-wwii-flag-taken-as-a-war-trophy-returns-in-friendship-1.256767>

Online newspaper periodical detailing the story of one American service member and his quest to return a flag he found in WWII. This is one specific story just like the many that Simon Harrison uses in his paper.

**Seth Robson, Hana Kusumoto – US WWII vet returns flag to fallen Japanese soldier's family**

**Stars and Stripes, Aug 15, 2017**

<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/us-wwii-vet-returns-flag-to-fallen-japanese-soldier-s-family-1.482878>

Another return of a Japanese good luck flag, very similar stories, again it's the individual, and his own motivation driving him to return the flag. Also discusses Obon Society and their mission.

**Kyle Spurr - Rex and Keiko Ziak strive to return Japanese flags to families: These war trophies are often the only tangible link to soldiers missing in action**

**Chinook Observer, Mar 20, 2015**

<http://www.chinookobserver.com/co/life/20150320/rex-and-keiko-ziak-strive-to-return-japanese-flags-to-families-these-war-trophies-are-often-the-only-tangible-link-to-soldiers-missing-in-action>

Newspaper story covering the husband and wife couple who founded and run the Obon Society. They discuss the history and significance of the flags to the Japanese as well as American motivations in their desire to find one.

## Appendix -- Images



Figure 1 Example of Yosegaki Hinomaru. Original owner: Eihachi Yamaguchi  
 image source: [http://military.wikia.com/wiki/Good\\_Luck\\_Flag](http://military.wikia.com/wiki/Good_Luck_Flag)

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**Page 19, Articles 7(b)(ii); 13(b,c,d,); 15)**  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/OPERATIONAL\\_GUIDELINES\\_EN\\_FINAL\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/OPERATIONAL_GUIDELINES_EN_FINAL_FINAL.pdf)

**Kimi Robinson – “Obon Society works to heal World War II wounds by returning wartime flags, but labor of love has a cost”**  
**Japan Times, August 1, 2018**  
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