

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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Prisoners of war from Tsingtao during the First World War: A Comparative Perspective

The historiography of the First World War has over the last few years quickly shifted beyond the confines of the fields of Flanders and the Somme. The ripples from the seismic change that the First World War enacted were instantly felt in countries beyond Europe's borders. The participation of non-European countries, the economic and military mobilisation of the British and French Empires means that the war must be looked at from a global context. Internment in the First World War perfectly highlights this global phenomenon. Britain ran a global camp network that stretched from the Isle of Man, to South Africa, India, the Caribbean and Australia, while France transferred many of its prisoners of war to its possessions in North and West Africa. Neutral countries as far away from Europe as Chile even had internment camps. Japan housed around 4,800 Prisoners of War, taken after its successful siege of Tsingtao. This talk will offer a comparative perspective on the treatment of Germans in internment from 1914-1920. The "myth" of the good treatment of Prisoners of War in Japan is being challenged as more and more research into the camps is done. In contribution to this debate, the main question this talk will seek to address is how did prisoners from the colony of Tsingtao fare in comparison to their counterparts from the other German colonies?

Mahon Murphy is a PhD candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science under the supervision of Professor David Stevenson. His thesis concerns the establishment of prisoner of war and civilian internee camps to house internees from the former German colonies. In the course of his research Mahon has received a one year research grant from the DAAD and a Gerda Henkel/Historial Peronne Bourse. He is currently a visiting Research Fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin where he is participating in the 1914-1918-online.net online First World War encyclopaedia. His chapter on the cultural impact of First World War internment in Japan will be published early next year in an edited volume by Brill.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum for early/mid career researchers and Ph.D. candidates in the field, organized by Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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