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Mosaic of Memories: Understanding the Network of Remembering of Kamioka POW Camp

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ABSTRACT
This article analyses the network of remembering surrounding Kamioka POW camp in Japan. It finds that a combination of places and objects, interactions, and memory practices form a dynamic network that is in constant flux. Kamiokan memory sites include the former campsite, a cenotaph, a Book of the Names of the Dead, war diaries and dedicated websites, and these sites of memory acquire meaning through activities such as reconciliation trips, and commemorative ceremonies. Due to the ongoing engagement with these places and objects, their connotations continue to develop and change, leading to a network that constantly evolves.

Introduction

In 2016, the author visited the former site of Kamioka Prisoner of War (POW) Camp located at 1600 metres above sea level in the Japanese Alps, north of Nagoya on Honshu Island, Japan.[1] This was part of research for a biography of Herman Adriaan Bouman (1909-1968), one of the former inmates. Facilitated by members of the POW Research Network Japan (POWRNJ), the trip involved a series of meetings, including one with the son and daughter-in-law of a former camp guard, and an excursion to the remains of the camp site. Among the physical remnants of the camp still visible in the vicinity are an embankment supporting a flat and scrubby area cut out of the mountainside; the entrance to the mine where the allied POWs laboured; a path

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[1]The exact location is Kamiokacho Wasabo, Hida, Gifu 506-1105, Honshu Island, Japan (36°20'54.5"N 137°18'46.4"E). The name of the camp was changed several times, from Osaka Kamioka Branch Camp, to Osaka 7-B, Nagoya 1-B and finally Nagoya 7-B. The POWs continued to refer to it as Kamioka POW Camp.

through the woods used daily by the prisoners; a stretch of road they had excavated; and a farm area where some of them had been sent to work the land. Standing on the ground where seventy years before the men had walked, it was possible to visualise them going about the routines described in the six surviving diaries of Kamioka POWs. Later that day, the author was shown two objects at a local temple site. There, a cenotaph dedicated to the POWs who died in Kamioka had been erected in the 1980s by a local Japanese man. Within the temple and encased in a box lies a beautifully calligraphed book with the names of all the young men from the area who died in Japan's wars going back to the Meiji restoration of Japan in 1868, including a list of the POWs who died in Kamioka. The array of traces of the camp and its inmates made the author wonder where else might be found *lieux de mémoires*, or sites of memory, of Kamioka POW Camp, and how to link all these disparate sites and sources together.[2]

Pierre Nora notes, in quoting Maurice Halbwachs, that '(…) there are as many memories as there are groups…memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual.'[3] The sources studied prior to this trip, in particular the camp diaries, did indeed reveal a wide array of 'vernacular' memories, each representing a unique experience of similar circumstances.[4] But it was also clear that their meaning changed each time they were read, growing from sober texts recounting facts of camp life, to private monuments to each author bearing the stamp of their individual characters, their habits, cultural background, worldviews, and hopes and dreams. The visit to the former campsite and the temple brought a whole new level of understanding of the memories laid down in the sources and contextualised Nora's description of memory which just as 'life, [is] in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.'[5]

The ambition of this article is to piece together the dynamics of the 'network of remembering' surrounding the former inmates of Kamioka POW Camp.[6] There are

[2]Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24.
[3]Ibid., p. 9.
[4]Compare similar findings regarding life writing from Fukuoka Camp 1 in: Sarah Kovner, *Prisoners of the Empire. Inside Japanese POW Camps,* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), in particular chapter 6 'Captivity on the Home Front', pp. 137-156.
[5]Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 8.
[6]Kyoko Murakami and David Middleton, 'Grave Matters: Emergent Networks and Summation in Remembering and Reconciliation', *ETHOS* (2006), Vol. 34, No. 2, pp.

six diaries, a memoir and an autobiographical novel, the cenotaph, and the book of the names of the dead, but also other available sources of memories of Kamioka such as dedicated websites, cemeteries where the ashes of the deceased POWs rest, recorded testimonies, and newspaper articles, all have their own unique origins and histories, and divergent reasons for their continued existence. Some are widely accessible, others much less so, yet they are all part of the same network of remembering. The main body of the article opens with a brief case study of an Indo-European POW named Adolphe R.G.E. Verstift (1895-1944), that illustrates the complexity of such a network, and the many obstacles to unearthing all the relevant sites of memory. Then, in order to analyse the mosaic of memories of Kamioka POW Camp, and their past, present and future significance, the second section delves into the origins, the substance and the theoretical positioning of a selection of sources of memories of Kamioka. On occasion, the significance and meaning of a particular memory source may be understood in different ways. The temple site, for example, may be seen as both a 'site of mourning' as well as a 'site of memory', both a 'mnemonic site' and a site of 'memorialisation'.[7] Diaries are forms of 'memory writing', but they also qualify as 'sites of memory', meeting Nora's standard of 'double identity': there was a 'will to remember' at their inception, and there is an ongoing 'capacity for metamorphosis' of their meaning and their ramifications.[8] Besides the contexts in which the different sources of individual memory and the practices of remembering were conceived, the coming about and the dynamics of the network of remembering are also examined. Of particular relevance here are the diverse ways in which individual memories migrate from the private to the public sphere, acquiring new meanings as well as contributing to changing dynamics in the public realms of memory.[9] As we shall see, shared practices of memory such as commemorative ceremonies and reconciliation

273–296, ISSN 0091-2131, electronic ISSN 1548-1352, p. 286. Also pertinent are the memories of the many other people connected to Kamioka POW Camp such as the Japanese commander and guards, the Korean workers, the Japanese miners working alongside the POWs, and the local villagers, but these fall beyond the scope of this article.

[7]Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History'; Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid monarchy: power and pageantry in modern Japan,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[8]Paula Hamilton, 'A Long War: Public Memory and the Popular Media', in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, (New York: Fordham University, 2010), pp. 299-311, p. 299. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1c999bq.24; Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 19.

[9]Paula Hamilton, 'A Long War', p. 299.

trips play an important part in this process.[10] The final section focusses on the significance and role of the relatively recent development of virtual memory sites, before closing with final remarks and conclusions.

Remembering POW Verstift

The complexity of the Kamiokan network of remembering is illustrated by the case of POW Adolphe Richard George Emile Verstift, born on 10 June 1895, who died on 19 March 1944 in the Kamioka Camp. Sifting through all the available sources, a first trace of Verstift can be found in an article in a Dutch newspaper dated 1 July 1943, listing the names of soldiers imprisoned as POWs in Japan.[11] The next mention of him is in one of the surviving camp diaries kept by Stephen R. Harle (1921-1970) which is archived at the Imperial War Museum in London,

> 20 March 1944: One of the men died this morning after having been unconscious for more than 30 hours, through being hit on the head by a fall of stone in the mine. I often wonder that more of us aren't killed working down there. Absolutely no precautions taken against falls. Very dangerous no first aid of any kind whatsoever.[12]

Although Harle speaks of 20 March 1943 as the date of death, no other prisoners died on this day, and there are more comparable discrepancies in dates of death between Japanese and Western sources, making it likely that it was, indeed, Verstift that Harle was speaking of. If we then examine the list in the back of the Book of the Names of the Dead kept at the Zuiganji temple in Kamioka, Verstift appears to be listed as Number 42, with the 'katakana' characters transcribing phonetically as *Fuoru*sutefuto* (Verstift), and 19 March 1944 as date of death.[13] Moving on through all the sources,

[10]For more on these 'social and performative practices' see Geoffrey M. White and Eveline Buchheim, 'Traveling War: Memory Practices in Motion, Introduction', *History & Memory*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015), p. 5-19, p. 5.

[11]'Nederlandsche militairen in Japansche krijgsgevangenschap', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1 July 1943. https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/. Accessed 7 December 2023.

[12]Harle speaks of 20 March 1943 as the date of death. No other prisoners died on this day, and there are more comparable discrepancies in dates of death between Japanese and Western sources, making it likely that it was, indeed, Verstift that Harle was speaking of. Imperial War Museum London (hereinafter IWM), Private papers S.R. Harle, Documents.8460.

[13]Due to the phonetic transcriptions of the names of the POWs, deciphering the Book of the Names of the Dead is a painstaking process. As regards Verstift, the verification can be made based on date of death which is listed as 19 March 1944 (Shōwa 19), and the age of 49 years. The roster of Dutch POWs used for the verifications can be found

there are more brief mentions of Verstift, for example as Number 124 in a list in the back of an autobiographical novel of Kamioka written by J.A. Wormser, followed by a cross after his name.[14] More expansive is a virtual headstone attached to the Menteng Pulo cemetery in Java, Indonesia, where Verstift's ashes are interred.[15] Here, we see not only a picture of Adolphe Verstift, but also one of the urns with his ashes in its resting place at the cemetery. This website turns out to be a gateway to a whole new world of remembering. One or two clicks, and you enter a dedicated website that includes 'The life history of Granddad Verstift', extensive information on the Indo-European community and the challenges they faced before, during, and after the Second World War, pictures of relevant books and maps, one of the so called 'hellships' *Kamakura Maru 1* in which Adolphe Verstift was transported to Japan, aerial views of Kamioka Branch Camp, personal documents and more.[16] Another website offers pictures, texts of speeches and a poem, and a video of the posthumous awarding of a Dutch Mobilisation Cross to Verstift.[17] But what also becomes clear is that the descendants of Verstift, who organised family commemorations in the Netherlands and at Menteng Pulo cemetery in Java, as well as lovingly designing these websites, are unfamiliar with the cenotaph and the Book of the Names of the Dead in the Zuiganji temple. Neither are they aware of the mentions of Verstift in the diary of Stephen Harle, in what probably amounts to the final observations about their loved one made by someone who at the time lived in close proximity. This is the point where there is a rift in the network of remembering of 'a historical past that is sometimes unsettling,

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at: https://www.japansekrijgsgevangenkampen.nl/Naamlijst%20Nagoya%201B.htm. Accessed 23 July 2024.

[14]J.A. Wormser, *De nacht van de rijzende zon, een Hollandsche krijgsgevangene in Japan 1942-1945* [The Night of the Rising Sun, a Dutch prisoner of war in Japan 1942-1945], (Kampen: Kok, 1989), appendix 1.

[15]Oorlogsgravenstichting, 'Adolphe Richard George Emile Verstift', *Oorlogsgravenstichting*, https://oorlogsgravenstichting.nl/personen/160020/adolphe-richard-george-emile-verstift. Accessed 12 January 2024.

[16]C.E.M. Banse, 'De levensgeschiedenis van Opa Verstift' [The life history of Granddad Verstift], *Oorlogsgravenstichting*, 21 December 2016, https://oorlogsgravenstichting.nl/personen/160020/adolphe-richard-george-emile-verstift. Accessed 12 January 2024.

[17]Banse Projectmanagement, 'Mobilisatie Oorlogskruis. Uitreiking Mobilisatie Oorlogskruis aan Opa Verstift 9 December 2016' [Mobilisation Warcross. Awarding of Mobilisaton Warcross to Granddad Verstift 9 December 2016], *Erkenning voor A.R.G.E. Verstift*, https://banseprojectmanagement.nl/portfolio/erkenning-voor-a-r-g-e-verstift/. Accessed 12 January 2024.

sometimes transgressive, sometimes controversial, sometimes benign, sometimes reconciliatory and healing'.[18]

This case study briefly illustrates the diverse range of sources relating to Kamioka, and the difficulties one may encounter when trying to access sites of memory, and the network of remembering as a whole. In the following, the Kamiokan sites of memory, their origins and their movements between the private and the public realm are examined in more detail.

Diaries

The six diaries written during captivity in Kamioka POW Camp that are known to have survived are what Philippe Lejeune terms 'crisis diaries'.[19] Written under life-threatening circumstances, it was strictly forbidden by the Japanese military authorities to keep a diary or journal, and discovery could lead to anything from communal punishment for the whole camp, to the torture and/or putting to death of the author.[20] It took determination and audacity to withstand the constant fear of discovery, and the most common reasons for doing so were to bear testimony for posterity, out of a sense of duty, and to attempt to bring some form of order to the uncertainty and chaos surrounding them.[21] All these motives are found in the Kamioka diaries. 'Although I hope and trust that we will see each other again in good health' writes Gerben J. Wassenaar (1912-1997) on 26 December 1942 in the diary he addressed to

[18]Collin Rusneac, 'Building Transnational Memories at Japanese War and Colonial Cemeteries', https://apjjf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/article-618.pdf, p. 13. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[19]Philippe Lejeune, 'How Do Diaries End?', in Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak (eds.), *On Diary,* (Honolulu: University of Hawaïi Press, 2009), pp. 187-200.

[20]Eveline Bucheim, *Passie en Missie. Huwelijken van Europeanen in Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië 1920-1958* [Passion and Mission. Marriages of Europeans in the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia 1920-1958], (Amsterdam: NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2009), p. 113; Esther Captain, *Achter het Kawat was Nederland. Indische Oorlogservaringen en -Herinneringen 1942-1955* [Behind the Fence Were the Netherlands. Indies War Experiences and Recollections 1942-1945] (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2002), p. 68.

[21]Renate Laqueur Weiss, *Writing in Defiance. Concentration Camp Diaries in Dutch, French and German, 1940-1945,* (Ann Arbor: New York University, 1971), pp. 16-29; Esther Captain, *Achter het Kawat was Nederland*, p. 70. Significant other reasons include (among others) self-assertion, writing oneself out of the camp, upholding an alternative identity and attempting to survive, if only on paper, see further E. Hoegen, 'Narrating the Imprisoned Body in Life Writing from the Kamioka Camp', *Life Writing*, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/14484528.2021.1967141

his wife, 'I still want to write some letters or notes in case this isn't the case.'[22] Herman A. Bouman (1909-1968), the author of a markedly optimistic Kamioka diary, is written in the form of several 'letters' to his elder brother, and he notes,

> (….) I do believe that I would be well advised to capture a few impressions of the past period in order to prevent it from shortly being impossible to have the rusty memory reproduce those events. (…) it is not just the urge to fulfil a duty, that brings me to compose a letter to you, but also that it feels like a pleasant way to pass the time, which offers me an opportunity to bring some order to the many thoughts that torment my brain.[23]

Ben P. Rüphan (1913-1985), dedicating his diary to his wife, writes that he originally intended to use the exercise book he has managed to obtain to take notes during a chemistry course (organised by the POWs), 'however, I had to change its purpose, because I, too, felt the need to record some matters, in the form of a letter to you'.[24] The diary entries written by J.P.M. 'Flip' Stouten (1902-1991), recounting his daily trials and tribulations as a POW are, likewise, addressed to his wife, Lotte, albeit mostly implicitly: 'Sunday 9 September [1945] (…) wrote a letter to you; (….) I long for Manilla, where perhaps there is a message from you.'[25] These four diaries, written by Dutchmen who had all lived and worked in the colonial Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) since at least the 1930s, were in effect continuations of their well-established pre-war routines of writing home regularly to family in the Netherlands. It should also be noted that, contrary to Clare Makepeace's account of letter and diary writing practices in German POW camps, those held in Japanese camps were only rarely allowed to write or receive letters or postcards, literally cutting them off from their loved ones for years on end.[26] Therefore, all their desires and attempts to communicate with home were channelled into their diaries, and the often extensive

[22]Private collection Wassenaar Family, Australia, *G.J. Wassenaar, Diary*, Original diary and typed out translation.
[23]Archives of Groningen, 2553 Bouman Family nr. 19, *Aantekeningen en overpeinzingen van Herman Adriaan Bouman tijdens Japanse gevangenschap* [Notes and thoughts of Herman Adrian Bouman during Japanese imprisonment].
[24]Private collection Rüphan Family, The Netherlands, *B. Rüphan No. 52*, Original diary and a typed transcript.
[25]NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 11.24 Sto, *"Dagboek": Kamioka krijgsgevangene nr 102: 1942-oktober 1945* ["Diary": Kamioka POW nr. 102: 1942-October 1945], 2007.
[26]Clare Makepeace, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

entries recounting their thoughts mean these accounts qualify as what Makepeace terms 'reflective diaries'.[27]

By contrast, American sergeant Joseph G. Pase's diary is a military log on the welfare of the company he was commanding, written for the benefit of his superiors.[28] Entries are terse and to the point: 'August 22, 1944: Pvt. Joslin, F.L., attempted escape from mine; apprehended by Japanese and placed in confinement in this camp'; 'December 15, 1944: Sgt. Lanning: leg amputated.' The only diarist not to address anyone else is British leading aircraftman Stephen R. Harle (1921-1970).[29] His is a journal consisting of brief entries on camp routines, on food, on feeling cold, hungry and depressed, and on the ever-increasing number of deaths. But his diary is also full of sketches revealing a dark and ironic sense of humour, memorised poems, graphic designs, lists of favourite food from home, and names of friends made in the camp. This makes his diary part testimony to current events, part self-expression, and part the ensconcing of a longing for, and memories of, home.

The Kamiokan journals are in themselves sites of memory, meeting Nora's requirement of the 'double identity'. As the excerpts above show, they carried the 'will to remember' at their inception. The Kamiokan POWs committed events, thoughts and longings to paper as an act of testimony, of bearing witness, and the diaries are the 'material, symbolic, and functional' embodiment of this inherent wish to carry forward into the future the memory of the lived experience.[30] Although after the end of the war many of the diaries initially disappeared into drawers in desks, there to remain for decades, five of the six diaries were eventually moved into the public realm and made available to a larger readership. Stephen Harle's diary was discovered by his children only after his death in July 1970 and was then donated to the Imperial War Museum in London in 1999.[31] In the decades after Herman Bouman's death in 1968, his family considered publication of the diary, but nothing came of this plan. However, a transcript was offered to the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam in 1983, and a copy can be found in the Groningen

[27]Clare Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 16.
[28]Center for Research Allied POWs Under The Japanese, 'Record of Events by Sgt. Joseph G. Pase' (original diary and a transcript)', *Nagoya POW Camp #1-B Kamioka*, http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/nagoya/kamioka_1/NAG-01_Pase_Diary-s.pdf. Accessed 12 January 2024.
[29]IWM Private papers S.R. Harle, Documents.8460.
[30]Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 19.
[31]This information is based on personal correspondence between the author and the family of S.R. Harle, as well as the date of the cataloguing of the diaries by the IWM on 26 October 1999.

Archives.[32] Jan Gerben Wassenaar's diary was typed out and translated by family members for private reference, and a copy was given to the POWRNJ in September 2015.[33] Sergeant Pase's diary was submitted to the American Prisoner of War Information Bureau on 1 March 1946, and is kept at the National Archives and Records Administration in the USA. In the early 2000s, it became much more widely accessible when it was posted online by the Center for Research Allied POWs Under The Japanese.[34] Finally, Flip Stouten's diary was published in 2007 in a limited edition 'for family and friends', of which a copy can be found in the library of NIOD in Amsterdam.[35] Upon their transition into the public realm, POW diaries opened themselves to different interpretations and significance. No longer just for the author's or the initial addressees' eyes, the diaries were read by children and grandchildren, many of whom knew little to nothing about their (grand)father's wartime experiences, and then read too by third parties. As the persona of the former POWs as captured in the diaries were revealed to an increasing number of readers, thus transmitting hitherto unknown identities and experiences to younger generations, the journals acquired new layers of meaning. This process is vividly captured in Hanna Stouten's article on her uncle Flip Stouten's war writings. Recalling her childhood thoughts when Uncle Flip, newly released from Kamioka, moved into her family home with his wife and children upon their return to the Netherlands at the end of the war, she writes,

> Later, we'll get to understand the real experiences, we thought. 'The real experiences', we now know, don't exist, and over the last sixty years, the ambitious 'understanding' has been downgraded to 'trying to understand'. The war documents found in a recently opened file [discovered at home] offer us a second chance.[36]

The larger context in which the diaries were read, that is to say the surrounding discourse, has also evolved, leading to different layers of meaning and significance being found in the war writings. As time went by, an ever-increasing number of books and articles were published that dealt with imprisonment by the Japanese, and diaries, journals and memoires became increasingly popular. Initially, academic writings tended

[32]Correspondence in the private collection of the Bouman family, The Netherlands.
[33]Information provided by Taeko Sasamoto, email to author of 1 April 2016.
[34]See footnote 28.
[35]See footnote 25. The one remaining diary, written by Ben Rüphan, has not (yet) entered the public domain, but a copy was made available to the author by his daughter.
[36]Hanna Stouten, 'Noodrantsoen moet je doen. Hoe de geest overleeft; voor, in en na Japan, 1942-1981', *Indische Letteren*, Vol. 23, pp. 23-47, p. 23. Available online at: https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ind004200801_01/_ind004200801_01_0004.php. Accessed 23 July 2024.

to focus on a reconstruction of events experienced by POWs and civilian inmates in the Japanese camps of the Pacific and South East Asia, but the focus of later work shifted to other perspectives, such as the long-term effects of imprisonment on the body and the mind, and related issues such as intergenerational transmission of trauma. And with the rise of memory studies, the lines of approach have moved away from history, psychology and trauma studies, towards a deeper understanding of memorialisation, commemoration, and memory practices. In summary, the diaries that survived Kamioka, now spread around the world, are an important part of the 'network of remembering'.

In and around the former campsite

Other key *lieux de mémoire* are concentrated in one place: Kamioka itself. All that is left of the former campsite is a patch of ground at 1,600 meters elevation in the Japanese Alps which is now covered with grass, bushes and trees, and there is nothing that distinguishes the overgrown piece of land as the spot where some 600 American, British, Dutch, and Indo-European POWs were interned from December 1942 until early September 1945.

To recreate an image of what the camp must have looked like, we need to search the available Kamiokan sources such as the diaries and scour the archives and websites for sketches and pictures. Particularly useful here is the detailed two-page description given by former POW Jan Honing (1899-1986) in his published memoir, who had the advantage of being able to write more freely than those who wrote during their imprisonment.[37] Comparing Honing's description with memories ensconced in the other sources, the image that arises is of a fenced-off compound consisting of two wooden barracks housing the Dutch/Indo-European and the American troops, a building with an office and Japanese quarters, and several smaller buildings with the kitchen, bathhouse, etc. All around the camp were dense mountainous woods. Just inside the fence at the front of the camp ran a creek, and outside the gates a road connecting the local villages of Funatsu, where a second POW camp was sited, and Kamioka.

[37]Jan Honing, *Herinneringen aan het leven in Indië* [Memories of Life in the Dutch East Indies] (Santpoort: Brave New Books, 2014) pp. 186-187.

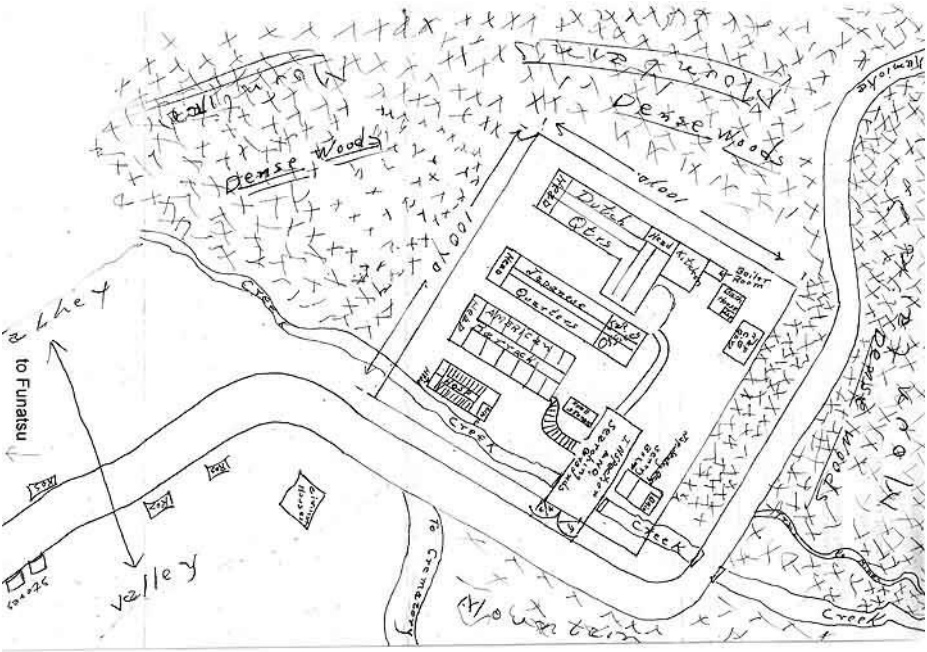

Figure 1: Sketch of the layout of Kamioka POW camp.[38]

In their diaries and memoires, and later testimonies, the POWs were scathing about the state of the barracks, the cold and snow in winter, and the heat in summer, the lack of food, clothing, and medicine, and the harsh working environment in the mine. As a result of malnutrition, accidents in the mine, illnesses, such as beriberi and pneumonia, neglect, deliberate maltreatment and torture, eighty-five men were to die, i.e. 14% of the total camp population.[39] Looking at the bushes and trees during a visit in April 2016, and allowing this realisation to sink in, an overgrown, seemingly

[38]Kamiokacho Wasabo, Hida, Gifu 506-1105, Honshu Island, Japan. Illustrator unknown, published online by Roger Mansell, Palo Alto, CA, at http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/nagoya/kamioka_1/kamioka_layout_1.jpg. Accessed 23 July 2024. The author would like to thank Wes Injerd, of the Roger Mansell Group, for permission to use this image. The exact location is Kamiokacho Wasabo, Hida, Gifu 506-1105, Honshu Island, Japan (36°20'54.5"N 137°18'46.4"E).

[39]Ernestine Hoegen, 'Narrating the Imprisoned Body in Life Writing from the Kamioka POW Camp', *Life Writing* (2022)19:2, pp. 241-258, DOI: 10.1080/14484528.2021.1967141

innocuous piece of ground instantly turned into a 'site of mourning'.[40] Even though the site is surrounded by 'divine hills', for the Japanese characters of '*Kami-oka*' translate as 'Hill of the Gods', death was present on this patch of land.

The Kamioka lead and zinc mine, where the POWs were used as forced labourers, is an equally charged memory site, but also a multi-faceted one. Here, the men who had no protective clothing, shovelled ore and operated drills in the poorly shored up corridors and shafts that run all the way through the mountain where they were subjected to rock falls and accidents. On 13 January 1943 Wassenaar wrote in his diary

> Yesterday and the day before, 5 died in total. Also had a cave-in near us in the mine – 2 of ours were killed. This morning another death. Makes a total of 11 in 1 month. It can't carry on like this. Yesterday God spared my life. I could have been in that spot in the mine too. These are tragic times.[41]

Yet the dark and dank shafts were also a place where the POWs could escape the watchful eye of their guards, and where they could engage in illicit trade with local miners and the Korean guards, operate a flourishing black market, and once even carry out a well-planned retaliation by four POWs against one of their Japanese overseers who had stolen a watch from one of them.[42]

During a 2016 trip to Kamioka, the author was also shown other sites where the men spent time during their years of captivity and which did not carry such charged memories. First of all, there is a place known as the Maruyami farm, where they were set to work excavating ground and doing manual labour. Although the work was still physically demanding, being away from the mine in the open air, as well as being offered better food and a chance to bathe, meant that in effect this location offered them a chance to rest and recover. Stephen Harle reports on 7 June 1945: 'Went away for one month farming to a place 10 miles from here'. Then on 6 July 1945: 'Back again, had a pretty decent month as far as things go.' On 22 August 1945 Herman Bouman writes,

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[40]Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[41]Private collection Wassenaar Family, Australia, *G.J. Wassenaar, Diary*, Original diary and typed out translation. Entry 13 January 1943.

[42]Ernestine Hoegen, 'National Narratives and Individual Agency: Negotiating Power Relations in Kamioka POW Camp', in: Eveline Buchheim and Jennifer Coates (eds.), *War Memory and East Asian Conflicts, 1930-1945*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), pp. 17-38.

> This year, I didn't work in the mine anymore, but spent my time doing all sorts of jobs outside, building bomb shelters and sheds, the planting of timbering, earthmoving work, shovelling snow in the winter, etc. In the summertime I often worked on the land and once even spent a month with twenty-five other Dutchmen, including eight of my roommates at a farm where we did reclamation work and were well-fed.[43]

Another location that is fondly remembered by some of the POWs was the house of a camp guard Mr. Masao Okada. Taking prisoners home with him, under the guise of needing extra labour, several POWs reported that he let them rest and offered them food. One American POW, Robert Vogler, recalled how Mr. Okada saved his life by giving him an egg to eat when he was starving.[44]

The site that undoubtedly qualifies as the most fraught *lieu de mémoire* of all for the POWs is the crematorium. Presumed to have been dismantled, this can now only be revisited in their writings. The crematorium was located some way off from the camp and was 'nothing more than a bare room with on one side a stone oven'.[45] Whenever a man died, a group of volunteers would load the body onto a stretcher and carry it out of the camp gates down a path towards the crematorium. 'The body was put on a sled and put into the oven by hand, like bread in an old-fashioned oven' recalled Jan Honing in his memoire. 'We could see the playing of the flaring woodfire around the sled, before the steel door was shut.'[46] The POWs soon found out why the local Japanese villagers transported their dead to the crematorium in a sitting position, with drawn-up knees, on a chair. The first POW to die in Kamioka, at Christmas 1942, was laid out on a stretcher, and could not fit into the small furnace. Honing remembers that '(g)rey with shock, our boys had to then practically break and fold their comrade to get him into the oven.'[47] On 26 December 1942, Wassenaar noted: 'Yesterday our third dead went to the crematorium. All happens very quickly.' In his autobiographical novel, Johan Wormser recalls trying to awaken a buddy in time for morning rollcall,

> 'Come on, man, hurry up or you'll get in trouble' and you pulled the blankets off his head…He needn't ever get in line for the lead mines again. In the

[43]Archives of Groningen, 2553 Bouman Family nr. 19, *Aantekeningen en overpeinzingen van Herman Adriaan Bouman tijdens Japanse gevangenschap* [Notes and thoughts of Herman Adrian Bouman during Japanese imprisonment]. Entry 22 August 1945.
[44]Fuyuko Nishisato, 'Nagoya POW camp No. 1 branch (Kamioka)' in: *Encyclopedia of Japanese POW Camps* (2023), p. 5.
[45] Jan Honing, *Herinneringen aan het Leven in Indië*, p. 190.
[46]Ibid., p. 190.
[47]Ibid., p. 189.

> afternoon they carried him through thick snow to the black goblin [the Japanese cremation worker, EH] and his 'roasting tin', the only warm spot in all of Japan.[48]

As more and more deaths occurred, the diarists tried to keep track of the numbers, and sometimes the names, of the deceased. Wassenaar on 4 May 1945: 'Friday. No. 63 died yesterday morning. Old Pareira from Amstelveen. From pneumonia too, though he took a bit longer to go. Awful to die just when we'd received news about different things, including the landings in the harbour. Helped carry the body to the crematorium unit.' Johan Wormser describes what happened to the ashes after a cremation,

> And the next morning the crooked, black goblin [Japanese crematorium worker] brought the ashes of the dead man in a little wooden box into the Jap office, a white wooden box, a cube of 20 centimetres, no more. A Japanese soldier took it to an open cupboard, where the other 66 boxes were piled up (…) 67 wooden boxes. On each a Japanese number and in a small folder in room 2 [the Dutch officers' room, EH] a long list, with a number after each Dutch name.[49]

What happened to the ashes, and how their post-war distribution led to further memory sites will be discussed later. But first let us visit a memory site where two significant objects of empathy and atonement are to be found.

Temple ground

Some way down the road from the former campsite lies the Zuiganji temple, a small, 400-year-old complex, of which the present temple building is 100 years old. Already for the POWs, this site had special meaning. 'The temple was a small gem and was located on a hillock, very picturesque with a grassy area in front and surrounded by deciduous trees, including wild cherries and spruce trees' recalled Jan Honing.[50] When the author visited this temple on 11 April 2016 it very much corresponded to this description. The temple ground is mesmerising, not just because of the beauty of the place, but also because of the unusual memorialisation within it of the POWs who died in Kamioka.

[48] J.A. Wormser, *De nacht van de rijzende zon,* p. 132.
[49] Ibid., p. 189.
[50] Honing, *Herinneringen aan het leven in Indië*, p. 188.

Figure 2: Zuiganji temple garden, Hida, Gifu, Japan, April 2016.[51]

As can be seen in Figure 2 there are several monuments in the temple grounds. One of these – the tall, thin cenotaph to the right of the centre - is of particular significance for the Kamioka POW network of remembering. There are Japanese characters inscribed on all four sides, and the ones on the front read 'Cenotaph for the martyrs of the Kamioka Prisoner of War Detachment'.[52] This monument was erected, not by descendants of the POWs themselves, but at the initiative of a local Japanese citizen, Mr. Sagara whose first name is unknown to the author. He lost an elder brother during the Second World War, and his name, and those of the sponsors of the cenotaph, are also inscribed in stone. Finally, there is an inscription of a Buddhist philosophy that all those who have fallen in war, regardless of whose side they were on, are to be remembered. 'This is chanting, meaning all those who are dead are to be memorised', explained Priest Tsuzuku. 'So, this Mr. Sagara meant to enshrine those POWs meaning also enshrining his own family members. So, this idea [is], everybody is connected in the world, [everybody] must be together.'[53]

With its inscriptions, and Priest Tsuzuku's explanation of its origins, the cenotaph stands for a recognition of a shared wartime experience of loss and grief. But an even more powerful physical representation of how 'wartime perceptions of the other have

[51]Photo by the author.
[52]Fuyuko Nishisato, 'Nagoya POW camp No. 1 branch (Kamioka)', p. 9.
[53]Priest Tsuzuku, Interview with Fuyuko Nishisato and author, 11 April 2016, Zuiganji tempel, Kamioka, Japan.

evolved into shared memory' is to be found in the temple itself.[54] Here, in a box dated 'November 1970', lies what may be called 'The Book of the Names of the Dead'. This book was a personal initiative of local Japanese citizen Mr. Kenichi Ogawa, and it contains the hand-written names of every single known local soldier who died in the wars after Japan's Meiji Restoration in 1868. Mr. Ogawa started writing out all these names immediately after the Second World War, and this labour of love took him nearly fifty years to complete. In the back of the book is an addendum consisting of lists of names, nationality, and dates of death of the POWs who died in Kamioka. Mr. Ogawa copied these names in secret from cremation certificates kept in the town office, where he worked as an assistant director.[55]

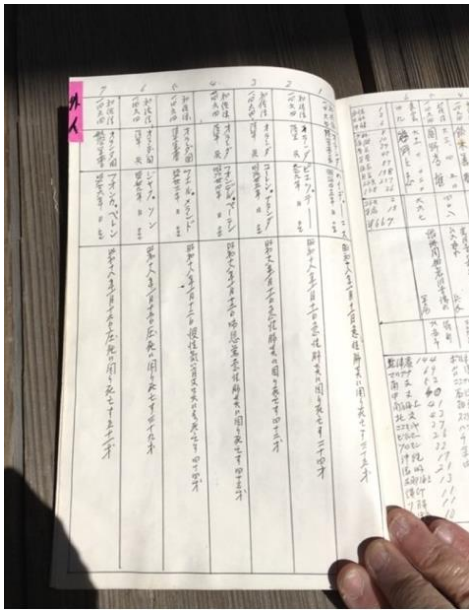

Figure 3 (left): Priest Tsuzuku explains *The Book of the Names of the Dead*. In the background is the box in which it is kept. **Figure 4 (right):** Addendum with the list of deceased POWs. Both photos by the author.

The Zuiganji temple is not only a site of memorialisation through 'tangible objects' such as the cenotaph and *The Book of the Names of the Dead*, but was also once a site

[54]Alison Starr, 'Forever Alongside: War Cemeteries as Sites of Enemy Reconciliation', https://apjjf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/article-619.pdf, p.8. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[55]Fuyuko Nishisato, 'Nagoya POW camp No. 1 branch (Kamioka)', p. 9.

of commemoration, encompassing 'intangible ceremonies and practices'.[56] According to Priest Tsuzuku, an annual memorial service was begun in 1983 and was conducted by the temple priest. It included all the names listed in *The Book of the Names of the Dead* which were chanted, *including those of the POWs.* It is possible that this chanting of names was done as part of the annual Japanese O-bon ceremonies, a three-day festival in August in which ancestors are remembered and honoured. Alternatively, it could have arisen as part of the annual commemoration of a peasant uprising that swept the region between 8 and 11 February 1871 and cost many villagers their lives.[57] With a cenotaph, *The Book of the Names of the Dead*, and an annual memorial service in which the names of the POWs were included, the Zuiganji temple is an example of a 'vernacular' cemetery, with 'largely unrecognized, and undervalued implications in terms of historical and political dimensions utilized in the integration of personal, familial and community-based dynamics, be they local, national or international'.[58] Collin Rusneac calls for the incorporation of such 'vernacular' cemeteries, with their own unique memory practices, into debates about Japanese memorials for the war dead. At present, this debate is still dominated by the highly contested Yasukuni Shrine, which honours approximately 2.5 million Japanese war dead as deities, including fourteen Class A war criminals.[59] But even the remote grounds of the Zuiganji temple have not been able to resist the far-reaching political connotations of memorialisation and commemoration, and the practice of including names of the POWs in the annual memorial service was discontinued in the early 1990s.

Reconciliation trips

One way to 'work' with traumatic Second World War memories, is to go on what is often referred to as a 'reconciliation trip', for 'it is, in particular, the activities that bring agents of remembering into and through the spaces of remembrance that shape the emotional meanings of memory'.[60] The first of such visits to Kamioka was

[56]Justin Aukema, Daniel Milne, Mahon Murphy and Ryōta Nishino, 'Introduction: Re-examining Asia-Pacific War Memories: Grief, Narratives, and Memorials', https://apjjf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/article-615.pdf, p. 7. Accessed 26 July 2024.

[57]Selçuk Esenbel, 'The Remembrance of the 1871 Nakano Uprising in Takayama Village as a Contemporary Trauma in Village Life Today', in Sven Saaler and Wolfgang Schwentker (eds.), *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan* (Folkestone: Global Oriental Ltd, 2008), pp. 337-359.

[58]Collin Rusneac, 'Building Transnational Memories at Japanese War and Colonial Cemeteries', p. 13.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Geoffrey M. White and Eveline Buchheim, 'Traveling War: Memory Practices in Motion, Introduction', in: *History & Memory*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015), pp. 5-19, p. 8.

undertaken in 1955 by former Dutch ensign Tjarda de Cock Buning. The ensuing newspaper reports make for unexpected reading. 'Reunion in village in Japan. Dutchman shook hands with former camp guards', is the title of an article in *Heerenveensche Koerier* of 1 November 1955.

> Ten years after his release from a camp in the Japanese mountains, T. de Cock Buning returned to Japan last week to thank a Japanese translator who offered support to the prisoners. (…) 'Many of the miners also helped us and started giving us food, after we started working in the mine', said Buning. 'I've come back to thank those people who tried to make life easier for us.'[61]

According to this newspaper report, Buning met up with the translator, five miners and two former soldiers, to share a meal, drinks, and memories. Afterwards, De Cock Buning, the former translator and the foreman of the miners drove up into the mountains and to the mine, the former POW camp, and the crematorium 'where 80 of the prisoners were cremated in the most horrific circumstances after they had died of cold'. Buning laid a wreath at the door of the crematorium and is quoted in the article as saying: 'The crematorium brought back the most awful memories … the oven was too small for our dead. It was built for small Japanese. First we had to burn the lower part of the body. It was the most awful experience of the war.' De Cock Buning concludes: 'Despite everything, I need to thank the Japanese who helped us during our imprisonment.'

Forty years passed before the next recorded reconciliation trip, this time by former American POW Robert J. Vogler. Vogler had managed to establish contact with prison guard Masao Okada – the man whom he says saved his life, not once but several times – and first made the trip to Kamioka in May 1997. Although Okada had died by this time, Vogler and his wife did meet his widow and three sons at Okada's home. He also gave a speech at a local school'

> I come to Kamioka a free man - as one who came to remember that other man who showed me that humanity can still exist despite opposing sides and different cultures. He recognized that I, too, was an individual of worth and not some faceless vile creature. He treated me with a degree of respect that I have never forgotten.[62]

[61]'Reünie in dorpje in Japan. Nederlander drukte de hand van vroegere kampbewakers', *De Heerenveensche Koerier*, 1 November 1955. https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/ Accessed 7 December 2023.

[62]John Wilkens, 'Robert Vogler Jr., Bataan Death March survivor who made peace with the Japanese, dies at 97', *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 8 June 2018

For Vogler, revisiting the past, and making connections with others involved in some way in the Kamiokan experiences, effected change in his well-being. 'I feel a lot better now', Vogler told the *Union-Tribune* in June 1997, shortly after returning from Japan, 'I think I left a little of the garbage back there.'[63]

Virtual memory sites

Reconciliation trips turn locations such as a former camp site, a crematorium and a mine into 'a dynamic memoryscape where enemies have met and continued to meet'.[64] Furthermore, the ensuing meetings between De Cock Buning and Vogler with their former enemies demonstrate 'how wartime perceptions of the "other" have evolved into shared memory'.[65] But travelling to the other side of the world in search of a former campsite and old adversaries is a difficult, expensive, and time-consuming undertaking. Furthermore, for those wishing to pay further tribute to their deceased forebears, the ashes of the men who died in Kamioka are not kept at the Zuiganji temple. Recalling the pile of little wooden boxes stored in the Japanese commander's office at Kamioka POW Camp. On 20 October 1945, they were handed over to the American troops who had occupied Japan after its surrender on 15 August 1945. At this point, the ashes went different ways depending on the nationality of the deceased. The remains of two British soldiers, Walter Frederick Boulding and Charles James Brandon, can be traced to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Yokohama.[66] The ashes of the Dutch and Indo-European soldiers who died in Kamioka were taken out of Japan by the Dutch military authorities and are now interred at the Jakarta Netherlands Field of Honour Menteng Pulo, in Indonesia. Finally, the families of the deceased Americans were given the choice of which country they wanted the remains of their loved ones to be buried, and eventually approximately 64% of all the remains recovered in the Pacific were repatriated.[67]

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https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/obituaries/sd-me-obit-vogler-20180607-story.html. Accessed 7 December 2023.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Alison Starr, 'Forever Alongside: War Cemeteries as Sites of Enemy Reconciliation', p. 3

[65]Ibid., p. 3.

[66]Commonwealth War Graves Commission https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/. Accessed 23 July 2024. Use this page to search for Gunner Walter Frederik Boulding or Leading Aircraftman Charles James Brandon.

[67]National Cemetery Administration, 'America's World War II Burial Program', *US Department of Veteran's Affairs*, 2020, p. 15. https://www.cem.va.gov/publications/NCA_America_WWII_Burial_Program.pdf Accessed 7 December 2023.

Via the website of the Yokohama Cemetery, it is possible to access several documents relating to each man buried there. These include a virtual 'headstone', and typed reports dealing with 'grave registration' and 'concentration', which together reveal when the ashes were buried or reburied at Yokohama, and in which plot the urn is to be found. At the Jakarta Netherlands Field of Honour Menteng Pulo one can likewise trace individual men via the cemetery website, raising a virtual headstone with one click. Below the name of the deceased, there is a button labelled 'Leave a Flower', and another 'Plant Memorial Trees'. Aimed at memorialising the lost lives, honouring the individual men who died, and recording the movements of the ashes and their present location, these documents are of themselves *lieux de mémoire*. As we saw in the opening case study of POW Verstift, for many, these virtual sites of memory are a lot easier to access than the physical ones discussed earlier.

Final remarks

In this article, we have touched on many elements of what may be referred to as the 'Kamiokan Network of Remembering'. First of all, it encompasses physical sites of memory. These include the former campsite, the mine, the crematorium, and the Zuiganji temple with a cenotaph dedicated to the POWs who died at Kamioka. Equally, objects such as *The Book of the Names of the Dead*, as well as diaries and memoirs written by the POWs, are significant sites of memory. For descendants of POWs held in Kamioka during the Second World War, both the survivors and those who died during the war, it is no easy task to locate all the different elements of the network, as illustrated in the case study of POW Verstift. To start with, the journey to the memory sites in and around Kamioka, as well as the Yokohama cemetery, Menteng Pulo cemetery in Jakarta, and cemeteries around the world where the American war dead are buried is a long and arduous one. Secondly, piecing together and understanding the different parts requires English, Dutch, and Japanese language skills, access to public and private archives in several different countries, as well as considerable time and resources. This is where virtual sites of memory, such as the ones found via the websites of cemeteries, as well as those dedicated to individuals such as Verstift, are proving increasingly valuable to those seeking information about, and access to, memories of former POWs. Even if one is not able to make a physical journey or a reconciliation trip, these sites make it increasingly possible to uncover at least some parts of the network of remembering. In all cases, it is the interactions with the sites of memory, be they individual or collective, as part of a private reconciliation trip or a public ceremony, that form the lifeblood of the network. It is this constant engagement between memory sites and actors that brings the network to life. One may even say that, in its totality, the Kamiokan network of remembering consisting of places, objects, interactions and practices, in itself constitutes an oscillating and vibrant site of memory.

Placing the Kamiokan network of remembering in a wider context of memory creation from Japan during the Second World War as a case study is representative of the way that the similar experiences of other Far Eastern POW camps live on in the public realm. Diaries and personal papers of POWs held in many camps in the Far East can be found in public archives around the world. Memoires, films and books abound, and the increasing versatility of online memory sites bodes well for the preservation of digitalised memories. Yet the true potency of a network of remembering, and the prerequisites for longevity reside in the continuation of 'social and performative practices' such as commemorations and reconciliation trips.[68] As said, it is the shared experience in the public realm that ensures that memories live on and continue to evolve. The remoteness of Kamioka, and the fact that since the author's 2016 visit that only one other visit appears to have been made, is an indication of the challenges involved in sustaining such a network of remembering when it is around a small and relatively obscure POW Camp.[69] Unlike major sites worldwide the smaller ones and their networks require dedication, careful nurturing and constant attention, and that is something that cannot be taken for granted.

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[68]Geoffrey M. White and Eveline Buchheim, 'Traveling War', p. 5.
[69]Fuyuko Nishisato, 'Nagoya POW camp No. 1 branch (Kamioka)', p. 10.