BEHIND THE MYTH OF THE JUNGLE SUPERMAN: A TACTICAL EXAMINATION OF THE JAPANESE ARMY'S CENTRIFUGAL OFFENSIVE, 7 DECEMBER 1941 TO 20 MAY 1942

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2000

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

BEHIND THE MYTH OF THE JUNGLE SUPERMAN: A TACTICAL EXAMINATION OF THE JAPANESE ARMY'S CENTRIFUGAL OFFENSIVE, 7 DECEMBER 1941 TO 20 MAY 1942, by MAJ C. Patrick Howard, USA, 123 pages.

This thesis studies the successful Japanese Centrifugal Offensive of 1941-42. The Japanese lacked realistic strategic objectives for the offensive, and the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), which was trained and equipped to fight the Soviet Army on the plains of Manchuria, had neither sufficient logistics structure nor appropriate equipment for a dispersed jungle campaign. Despite these severe strategic and operational failings, IJA tactical units achieved all of their objectives within six months. This study uses government documents, untranslated Japanese sources, and secondary works to examine the conscription system, training methods, equipment, and tactical doctrine that the IJA employed during the Centrifugal Offensive.

The study concludes that the IJA's aggressive training methods produced a skilled army that easily adapted to the unfamiliar jungle terrain of the Southwest Pacific. While the IJA's equipment was usually ill suited for battle against the Soviets, Japanese emphasis on light weight unintentionally made the IJA's standard issue items eminently suitable for jungle operations. Likewise, the IJA's doctrine was ideal for a short, offensive jungle campaign. The Centrifugal Offensive provides evidence to the modern military leader that well-trained soldiers will adapt to unfamiliar situations without special training, and that junior leaders can learn initiative through instruction and conditioning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe thanks to many people for helping me with this thesis. I am deeply indebted to my long-suffering thesis committee for helping me to turn some sophomoric prose and a few hazy ideas into an acceptable paper. The quality of my research owes much to the efforts of the staff members of the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) at Ft. Leavenworth. They are a treasure, as any officer who has had the privilege of doing research at CARL will readily attest. Major David Batchelor sharpened my writing with well-placed constructive criticism, and graciously lent me the Type 38 Arisaka rifle his father brought back from Okinawa, allowing me to fire and evaluate the Japanese infantryman's primary weapon firsthand. Lieutenant Colonel Noriharu Ohno, the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force's liaison officer to the Combined Arms Center, spent several hours helping me to translate the more obscure wartime Japanese characters in my references. Mr. Masatomi Okazaki, formerly a 16-year-old Imperial Japanese Naval Special Attack Squadron pilot, was extremely helpful during my research time in Shikoku, and provided invaluable insights into the mind-set of the wartime Japanese fighting man. Most importantly, my wife, Victoria, and my daughters, Mary Katharine and Lauren, enthusiastically helped me to work my way through piles of Japanese books, half century old government documents, and the battlefield accounts of long-dead soldiers. This project would have been impossible without all of their help.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GD	Grenade Discharger
HE	High Explosive
HEAT	High Explosive Anti Tank
HMG	Heavy Machine Gun
hp	horsepower
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
IS.	Island
lb	pound
lit.	literally, literal translation
LMG	Light Machine Gun
mm	millimeter
mph	miles per hour
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
oz	ounce
rpm	rounds per minute
TO&E	Table of Organization and Equipment

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Japanese Centrifugal Offensive of 1941-1942, stretching across 7,000 miles and nine time zones, is one of the most dramatic campaigns in modern military history. In the predawn hours of 8 December 1941 (Tokyo time), three divisions of Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) soldiers assigned to Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita's 25th Army boarded landing craft in the Gulf of Thailand, bound for the east coast of the Malay peninsula. At roughly the same time on the other side of the Pacific, squadrons of



Figure 1. Troops preparing to board transport ships. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 10 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 21 March 1942), 19.

Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) pilots climbed into the cockpits of their carrier-based aircraft off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii. By 0645 hrs that morning, much of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor and most of the U.S. Army Air Corps' aircraft in Hawaii were burning in their hangars. Seventy days later, the "impregnable"

British fortress of Singapore fell to the soldiers of the 25th Army, although Yamashita's men had faced an enemy that outnumbered them by nearly two to one. Hong Kong fell on 5 January, the Netherlands East Indies and the vital Burmese port of Rangoon on 8 March, and the Philippines on 9 May. The offensive ended with the defeat of the bulk of the British and Indian forces in Burma at Kalewa, on the Chindwin River, near the Indian border. On the surface, the Centrifugal Offensive was a master stroke by Japanese combined arms forces against a numerically superior enemy. Western characterizations of the Japanese as "pre-Hellenic, prerational, and prescientific" inhabitants of a "class-C nation" rapidly became tales of born jungle and night fighters with near superhuman powers.[1] The myth of the Japanese "Jungle Superman" had been born.

Underneath this seemingly invincible surface, however, was a markedly different reality. Indeed, most of the lessons that can be drawn from the IJA's Centrifugal Offensive are negative. By mid-1941, the Japanese government found itself backed into a corner. Two years earlier, because of strong opposition to Japanese military moves in China, the United States had terminated the thirty-year commercial treaty between the U.S. and Japan, causing significant harm to Japan's economy. In July 1941 the Japanese occupied French Indochina to halt the Allied land resupply of Chinese National forces via the port of Haiphong and the Haiphong-Kunming railway. As a consequence, the U.S. and Britain froze Japanese assets and placed an embargo on most exports to Japan, including petroleum products and high grade scrap metal. Together, these actions left Japan in danger of being unable to feed and clothe her populace, let alone maintain her earlier territorial gains on the Asian mainland.[2] Japan was faced with two alternatives to procure her necessary resources: (1) withdraw from the Asian continent and negotiate with the Allies, or (2) go to war to seize the raw materials necessary to keep her factories operating. Withdrawal being unacceptable to Japanese pride, the

Japanese leadership chose war. Their plan was a bold one. Initially, Japanese forces would destroy the powerful Allied forces in Malaya, the Philippines, southern Burma, Pearl Harbor, and several smaller installations in near-simultaneous assaults. The

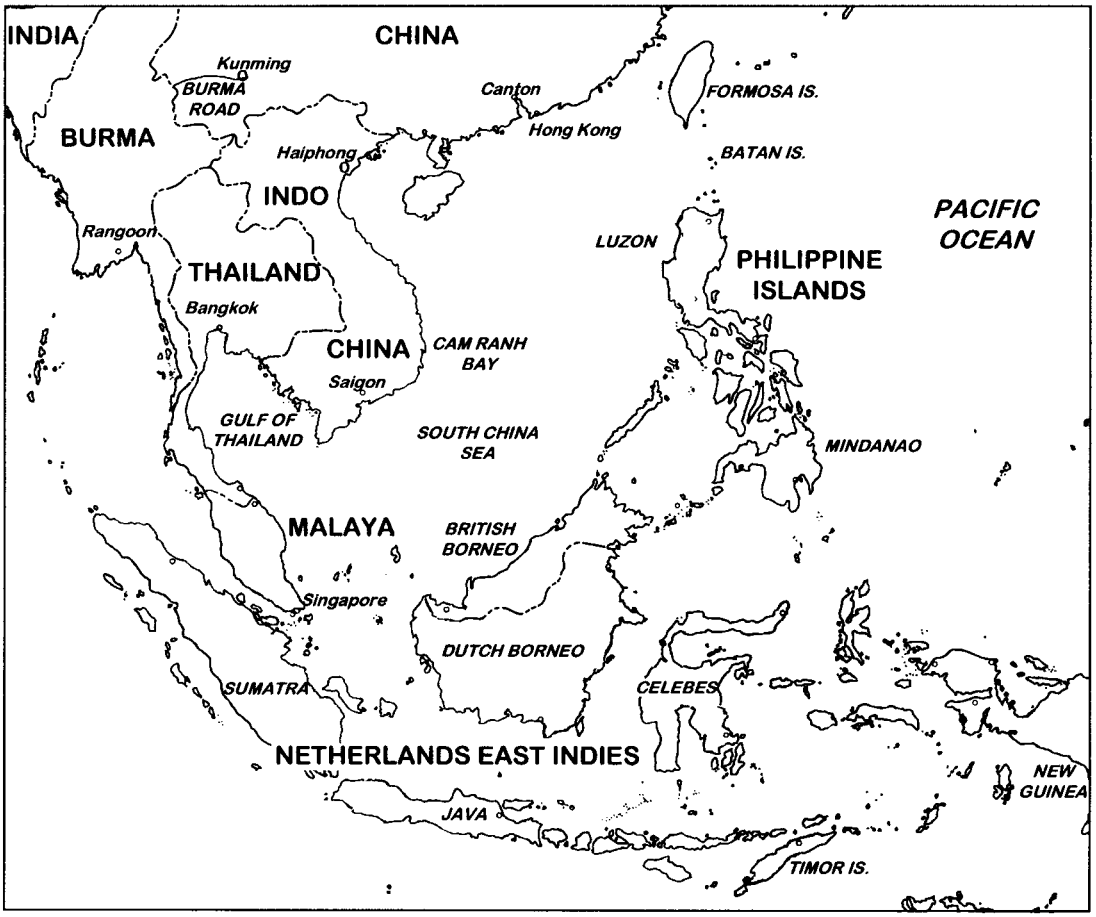


Figure 2. Southeast Asia, 1941-42. Map based on Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Map I.

flanks thus secured, follow-on forces would seize the rest of Burma and the lightly defended Netherlands East Indies, including the oil-rich island of Java,[3] gaining enough natural resources to make Japan self sufficient for the immediate future.

Although audacious, the Japanese strategy was fatally flawed from the beginning. Most critically, although the plan provided for the seizure of critical military operational-level objectives, these operational objectives were not tied to any realistic political strategic objective. The Japanese government severely miscalculated the will of the people of the West, especially the United States, dismissing them as soft and weak, unwilling to face the demands of a brutal war.[4] They believed that after an early string of Japanese victories, the West would quickly sue for peace, ceding control of the resource-rich Southwest Pacific to the Japanese. Because Japanese industry was unable to sustain a protracted war against the United States and Britain, Japan's leaders seem to have "wished away" the possibility of anything other than a rapid capitulation by the Western powers. Due to this critical strategic miscalculation, after late September 1941, political considerations were consistently subordinated to military ones at the highest levels in the Japanese government,[5] effectively "putting the cart in front of the horse." Thus, important long term strategic military targets like the shipbuilding and repair facilities at Pearl Harbor were neglected during planning, allowing the U.S. to rebound from her losses much more rapidly than the Japanese expected. Additionally, the military objectives of the Japanese plan were not matched to existing contingency plans or capabilities—only the IJN had a long range strategy for a Pacific Ocean war with the Western powers. The IJA, concentrating on expanding Japanese gains on the Asian mainland, was focused on a war against the Soviet Union. Because they had never seriously considered a protracted Pacific War against the west, the IJA ultimately became an ill-suited subordinate instrument of the IJN's Pacific War strategy, with disastrous results.[6] Because of these multiple strategic failings, when the Centrifugal Offensive failed to force the West to negotiate for peace, the IJA had no strategy for a

long Pacific War. Unfortunately for the Japanese, the West was in no mood to negotiate.

At the operational level the IJA was equally lacking. When the plan to conduct operations in Southeast Asia was announced in August 1941, it caught the IJA completely unprepared.[7] Because of their strategic focus on a rapid, decisive offensive victory against Soviet forces in Asia, the IJA had built a lean, infantry-heavy force configured to win an early victory by advancing quickly, penetrating or flanking when possible, and trusting the superior Japanese warrior spirit to carry the day against the foe.[8] Such a force would not be hampered by Japan's inadequate industrial base, because it required neither mechanization nor a cumbersome logistical tail. Indeed, a reliance on "material goods" was seen by many in the IJA hierarchy as an evil that would destroy the fighting spirit of the Japanese Army—the high command consistently resisted weapons modernization because they feared that it would lead to an abandonment of the infantry's tradition of hand-to-hand fighting. Thus, the logistical procedures and force structure necessary to surmount the challenges of supplying a force deployed from the Aleutian Islands to New Guinea were never developed—the Malayan invasion alone stretched Japanese lines of communication to the breaking point. General Yamashita himself, returning from a military inspection of Germany and Italy in June 1941, determined that the IJA was not yet up to the challenges of modern warfare. He concluded his report to the General Staff with the recommendation that Japan "exercise patience in avoiding the outbreak of war, meanwhile concentrating all of her strength upon the modernization of her military materiel."[9] With hindsight it is clear that, strategically and operationally, the IJA was fated to lose the Pacific War well before the first bomb fell on Pearl Harbor.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the factors that led to the IJA's success during the Centrifugal Offensive. With such serious flaws at the strategic and operational levels, how did the IJA achieve such brilliant tactical success against the combined forces of the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands? The initial phase of the Centrifugal Offensive against Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies was primarily an amphibious operation, yet the Japanese had abandoned development of an offensive amphibious capability more than a decade earlier. Japanese forces conducted the offensive across a broad front that incorporated the entire Southwestern Pacific, yet supported it on a logistical shoestring. Most of the battles of the Centrifugal Offensive were fought in the jungle, yet anecdotal evidence suggests that IJA jungle training for the invasion was superficial at best. How, then, could the IJA have won? *Were* the soldiers of the IJA "jungle supermen," or were there other reasons for the Japanese success? This thesis examines the IJA's conscription and training systems, the main weapons and equipment that IJA soldiers used, and their tactical methods during the four major operations of the Centrifugal Offensive—Malaya, the Philippines, the Netherlands East Indies, and Burma—to determine which characteristics of the IJA at the tactical level led to Japanese success.

This study has given greatest weight to primary sources, especially unit histories, various wartime "lessons learned" publications, and captured Japanese accounts. There are disappointingly few sources in the latter, potentially most useful, category due to the IJA's concerted effort to destroy all tactical and administrative records immediately following World War II. Despite the relative scarcity of scholarly research in this area, there are a few excellent English- and Japanese-language secondary sources, notably the Japanese Defense Agency's 102-volume official history of the war. Except where otherwise noted, this author translated Japanese language references.

This study helps to fill a gap that currently exists in modern western scholarship of World War II in the Pacific. While most existing histories concentrate on the many reasons for the failure of the Americans, British, and Dutch in the Southwest Pacific in 1941-1942, little time is spent examining the qualities inherent at the tactical level in the IJA that led to Japan's improbable victory. For the historian, this study provides "the other side of the coin" for these conventional treatments of the opening stages of the Pacific War. In addition, the IJA's methods of tackling the problems of operating in new and unfamiliar environments, training junior leaders to use initiative despite a larger institutional culture that stressed strong centralization, and maintaining sufficient control of widely dispersed subordinate units should provide food for thought for the modern military professional.

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[1] John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 106 and 112.

[2] H.P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 62-3, 71; Saburo Hayashi and Alvin D. Coox, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Quantico: The Marine Corps Association, 1959), 22-24; and Edward J. Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 31.

[3] Willmott, 76-77.

[4] Drea, 32; and Hayashi and Coox, 23.

[5] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Forces, Far East (Military History Section), *Political Strategy Prior to Outbreak of War* (Part IV), Japanese Monograph No. 150. 31 July 1952, 17.

[6] Drea, 33; and Hayashi and Coox, 7, 40.

[7] Drea, 27.

[8] Drea, 10-13; and Hayashi and Coox, 16.

[9] Hayashi and Coox, 26.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before discussing the factors that made the IJA's tactical level success possible during the Centrifugal Offensive, it is useful to review the Japanese Army's conduct of the operation as a whole. The main objectives of the Centrifugal Offensive were the defeat of the major Allied forces in the region and the seizure of the resource-rich Indonesian archipelago to secure many of the natural resources Japan needed to become self-sufficient. To accomplish this task, the Japanese attacked in three phases. In the first phase, Japanese forces defeated the major Allied forces in the region with a preemptive IJN air strike on Pearl Harbor and simultaneous IJA landings in Malaya and the Philippines. The IJA's main effort focused on Malaya, while supporting attacks seized Guam, Hong Kong, and parts of British Borneo, and occupying forces maintained stability in Thailand and French Indochina. As the Malayan operation progressed, the Japanese also seized essential objectives in southern Sumatra, and prepared for the invasion of Java. In the second phase, the Japanese seized Java and northern Sumatra, and commenced operations to seize air bases in southern Burma. In the final phase, the IJA defeated the British and Indian forces in Burma, cutting off the Allies' Burma Road resupply route to Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Chinese army.[1]

The Japanese conducted offensive across a staggeringly broad front—7,000 miles from Singapore to Pearl Harbor. Still, the IJA used only 11 of its 51 divisions during the operation, reserving the bulk of its forces for home defense and operations in China. A study of the operations in the four major areas of the Centrifugal Offensive—Malaya, the Philippines, the Netherlands East Indies, and Burma—demonstrates how truly remarkable the Japanese success was.[2]

Malaya and Singapore

The Malayan portion of the Malay Peninsula runs 460 miles from north to south, and is bisected by a high north-south mountain range. To the east of the mountains are broad flatlands, ending in sandy beaches. To the west, well-developed roads run along the narrow western coastline. The peninsula has numerous rapid east-west rivers that intersect the eastern and western plains laterally. The fortified island of Singapore, at the southern tip of the peninsula, was the center of all British plans in the Far East. The British had strongly fortified the island against attacks from the sea, and British political

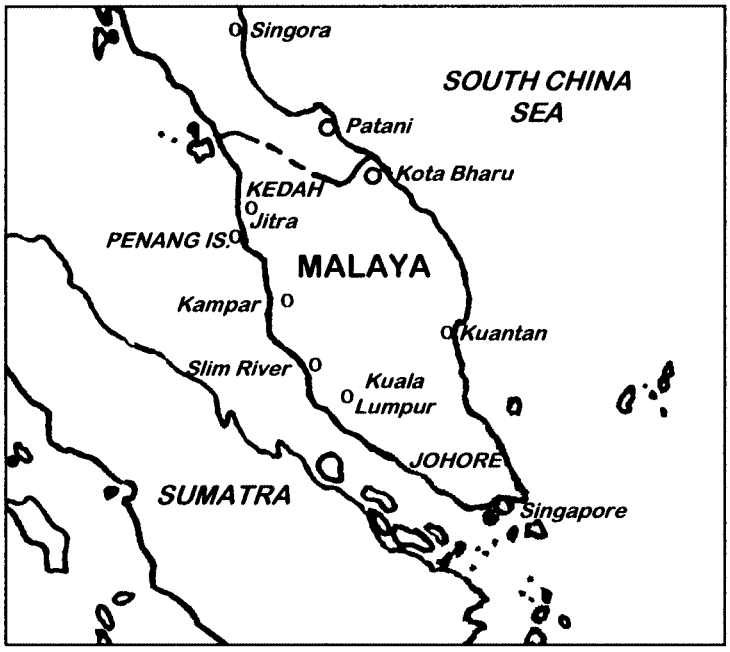


Figure 3. Malaya and Singapore. Map based on Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Map I.

and military leaders believed it to be "impregnable." Because Singapore-based British aircraft could threaten southern Japanese lines of communication and harass any

Japanese operations in Java and Sumatra, the seizure of Singapore received the initial focus of the IJA's effort in the Centrifugal Offensive.[3]

With most of the Royal Navy actively engaged fighting against the Germans, the British defensive plan focused on an aerial defense by 180 assorted aircraft operating from airfields on the Malay peninsula and on Singapore. Consequently, British Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, the ground force commander, deployed his three British and Indian Army divisions and three separate brigades in defensive positions near airfields. The III Indian Corps was charged with the defense of northern Malaya. III Corps' 11th Indian Division deployed near the Thai-Malayan border, while the 9th Indian Divsion was defended along the east coast. In the event of an imminent Japanese invasion through Thailand, the 11th Indian Division was to execute Operation Matador, which called for the occupation of Singora, several miles inside of Thailand, and its nearby airfields. From this key terrain, the British could defeat, or at least delay, any Japanese advance. Unfortunately for the British, because Matador involved violating Thai neutrality, it was not politically feasible, and thus never was executed. South of III Corps' area of responsibility, the 8th Australian Division was tasked to defend Johore, at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. An additional two infantry brigades were charged with the defense of Singapore Island proper, and a brigade remained in reserve. Because he had widely dispersed his divisions and brigades, General Percival was unable to concentrate his combat power at any one point until the Japanese had already overrun the peninsula. Royal Navy forces in Singapore, consisting of the recently arrived battleships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* and a few destroyers and cruisers, were located principally in Singapore, with the flexibility to attack either west or east, as the situation dictated.[4]

The Japanese invasion plan concentrated on airfields in the initial stages. The 5th Division (less a regiment), supported by a tank regiment, was to land at the Thai harbors of Singora and Patani, then move south across the Thai border and into western Malaya, where it was to capture the Kedah airfields and cross the Perak River. After crossing the Perak, the 5th Division was to drive further south and seize Kuala Lumpur. The 18th Division's 56th Infantry Regiment was to land on the eastern Malay coast near the key northern airfield of Kota Bharu, capturing the airfields in the northeast and then advancing south along the east coast to Kuantan. Another regiment of this division was detached from 25th Army to seize British Borneo, while the third regiment landed at Singora-Patani as part of the Army reserve. The Imperial Guards Division, after assisting the 15th Army in the occupation of Thailand and the initial phase of the invasion of Burma, moved south by rail and became the rest of the Army reserve. The heavily augmented 3d Air Division, with its more than 530 aircraft, was assigned to gain air superiority from the captured airfields, after which it provided the Japanese ground forces with tactical air support. A naval force from the Second Fleet escorted the landing forces and provided surface support. Key to the operation's success was the completion of the offensive in 100 days or less, before the British could deploy significant reinforcements to Singapore to augment the 60,000 to 70,000 soldiers that the Imperial General Headquarters estimated to be stationed on the island and peninsula.[5]

The 5th Division's landings at Singora and Patani at 0400 hours on 8 December (90 minutes before the Pearl Harbor Attack) were unopposed by the Thais, but the 56th Infantry Regiment's landing a few hours later met stiff resistance from British forces. Aided by naval gunfire, the regiment broke through the British brigade defending the coastline in a violent close battle, their soldiers throwing themselves against the British positions like "human bullets."[6] By midnight, the Kota Bharu airfield was in Japanese

hands. The Japanese aircraft that moved into the airfields at Singora and Patani destroyed 60 of the 110 British aircraft in northern Malaya by the end of the first day of hostilities, gaining air superiority by the end of the fourth day. To counter these heavy losses, the British sent their two battleships, the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales,* to find and sink the invasion fleet. Although the now shattered Royal Air Forces were unable to provide air support to the counterattack fleet, the British naval commander, Vice Admiral Tom Phillips, was skeptical about aviators' claims that battleships could be sunk by aircraft, so he proceeded with his attack. On the afternoon of 10 December, IJA aircraft sank both battleships, leaving the British Army effectively without air or sea support.[7]

After the decision not to execute Operation Matador, General Percival redirected the 11th Indian Division to its alternate positions at Jitra, to defend the vital port of Penang, which linked Burma and Singapore. Because of the extensive preparations required for Matador, the 11th Indian Division had done little work on their defensive line. They began preparations in earnest when they occupied the Jitra line on the evening of 10 December. By the afternoon of 11 December, the 5th IJA Division was engaging 11th Indian Division's lead elements. After an unsuccessful attack by two of the lead battalions of the 5th IJA Division against the 11th Indian Division's right flank, the British division commander, fearing that the Japanese would cut him off to his east, ordered a withdrawal. Exploiting their successes, the 5th IJA Division pressed the 11th Indian Division, forcing the evacuation of Penang and the abandonment of numerous junks, barges, and motor launches that the IJA would later use in waterborne flanking attacks.[8]

The 56th Infantry Regiment, 18th Division, enjoyed similar success after its seizure of Kota Bharu. Advancing steadily south down the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula, the regiment forced the 9th Indian Division into Kuantan by late December. To allow the 9th Indian Division time to extract itself west, and to protect Kuala Lumpur,

the 11th Indian Division occupied defensive positions in Kampar on 27 December. The 5th IJA Division attacked Kampar on the thirtieth. Unsuccessful using its usual tactics of flank attacks and infiltration, the 5th IJA Division executed an amphibious turning movement to the west, using small boats brought overland from the Singora landing site and the watercraft it had captured at Penang. With no significant reserves to counter the landings, the 11th Indian Division again withdrew, under constant aerial strafing and bombardment.[9]

After Kampar, the situation rapidly deteriorated for the exhausted British defenders in the north. Attacking with just a company of tanks supported with some infantry and engineers, the Japanese quickly punched through British positions at the Slim River on 7 January. Follow-on IJA infantry battalions fought through the disorganized defenders, completely destroying the 11th Indian Division's 12th Brigade and mauling the division's other brigade, the 28th. In all, only 1100 British and Indian soldiers escaped on foot. The Japanese captured all of the division's artillery and vehicles.[10]

Realizing the state of their forces, the British pulled their remaining units back to the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. The remnants of the 11th Indian Division would rest and refit in Johore. The 9th Indian Division and the fresh 8th Australian Division were tasked to hold a defensive line north of Johore along the Muar River, while the remnants of III Corps were assigned to defend the east and west coasts. After several penetrations by the elements of three Japanese divisions facing them forced the British forces into southern Johore, the British withdrew to Singapore Island on 30 – 31 January to preserve their remaining forces for the inevitable Japanese landings across the 2 - 3 kilometer wide Johore Strait.[11]

Singapore was hardly the “fortress” claimed by 1940s British politicians. Most of Singapore’s defenses protected against a possible attack from the sea—few of the heavy guns emplaced on fortifications in the south could be reoriented north. Nevertheless, General Percival had 80,000 soldiers with which to defend the 220 square mile island, and he had large stocks of ammunition and food. To meet the invading Japanese, Percival deployed his forces around the perimeter of the island, although his subordinate commanders recommended he concentrate his forces against the likely Japanese landing sites in the northwest and northeast. The British forces dug in in earnest. General Yamashita finally attacked on the nights of 9 and 10 February with all three of his divisions concentrated in the northeast. The Australian forces facing him fought stubbornly, but, lacking a sufficient counterattack force, the Australian line collapsed, re-forming around the city of Singapore by 13 February. The destruction of the water supply by Japanese artillery, threatening the population with a major epidemic, forced General Percival to seek surrender terms from General Yamashita on 15 February. The British surrender came just as General Yamashita’s 20,000 IJA attackers were nearing the end of their physical and logistical ability to continue the attack. IJA artillery units, down to less than 100 rounds per gun, had already been forced to cease counter-battery fire to conserve ammunition. However, the soldiers of the 25th Army had held out long enough. On average, each day they fought two engagements, covered 20 kilometers, and repaired five bridges. In just seventy days, they had shattered the myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority, replacing it with the new myth of the Japanese “Jungle Superman.”[12]

The Philippine Islands

At the same time that Japanese forces were launching their initial attacks on Pearl Harbor and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, the lead elements of Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma's 14th Army were moving towards the tiny island of Batan, north of the main Philippine island of Luzon. Although a less important objective to

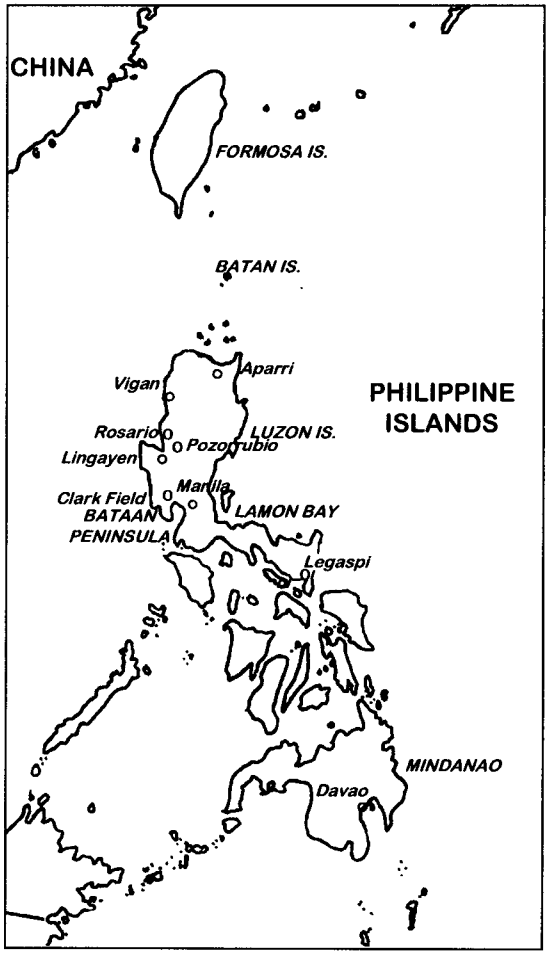


Figure 4. The Philippine Islands. Map based on Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Map I.

Japanese planners than Malaya, the 7,000 island U.S. commonwealth of the Philippines was positioned to cut Japanese lines of communication to both Canton, in China, and to the soon-to-be Japanese possessions in the Netherlands East Indies. Japanese planners believed that the 14th Army could take the northern island of Luzon in 50 days, half the time allotted to seize Malaya. The Japanese were concerned about the U.S. Army units in the Philippines, but the Imperial General Headquarters estimated these to number only around 22,000 troops. Japanese planners were unconcerned about the 141,000 native troops their ground forces would face. Thus, they tasked only two reinforced IJA divisions to take Luzon—the 16th Division, which had fought poorly in China, and the 48th Division, not yet blooded. As in Malaya, the initial Japanese goal was the early seizure of airfields in strategic locations, from which air forces would rapidly gain air superiority. Until the IJA took these airfields, Japanese aircraft would conduct their air strikes from Formosa. The Japanese planned to seize Batan Island for use as a forward air base, followed two days later by small unit landings to seize airfields at Aparri in the north and Vigan on the east coast of Luzon. On 12 December, an IJA regiment and IJN Naval Landing Forces would take the airfield at Legaspi, in southern Luzon. A final airfield and harbor would be seized at Davao, on the large southern island of Mindanao, on 20 December. The bulk of the 14th Army would then land on the eastern shoreline of Lingayen Gulf, in west Luzon, on 20 December, followed by a landing of 7,000 men at Lamon Bay, on Luzon's east coast, on 22 December. These last two forces would converge in a two-pronged attack on Manila, completing the defeat of U.S. and Philippine forces on Luzon. The rest of the Philippine archipelago could then be seized as time and resources allowed.[13]

General Douglas MacArthur, commanding general of the Allied forces in the Philippines, planned to defeat the main Japanese forces on the beaches as they

attempted to land. Five Philippine Army divisions were tasked to defend Luzon, three in the north under Major General Jonathan Wainwright, and two in the south. Three additional Philippine Army divisions were assigned the defense of the island of Mindanao, while MacArthur charged his coast artillery units with the defense of Manila Bay. The U.S. Army Philippine Division and two Philippine Army divisions stayed in reserve. Most of the ground units were light infantry divisions; although there were some horse cavalry units and two newly arrived tank battalions. Additionally, a strong air force, consisting of 107 modern U.S. fighter planes and 35 long-range B-17 bombers, and a small U.S. naval force supported the Allied ground units.[14]

At the opening of the campaign Japanese airmen, initially scheduled to strike Philippine airfields at the same time the IJN struck Pearl Harbor, were denied the element of surprise when a heavy blanket of fog delayed their takeoff by four and a half hours. Despite this delay, a communications breakdown left American pilots at Clark Field, the key U.S. air base in the Philippines, unprepared, and the Japanese destroyed more than half of the U.S. Far East Air Force on the ground, while losing only seven fighters themselves.[15]

The IJA fared equally well in its landings at Batan, Aparri, Vigan, and Legaspi on Luzon, which were unopposed, and at Davao, on Mindanao, which was only lightly resisted. MacArthur, aware of these landings, patiently waited for the main IJA force's landings, which he correctly projected would come at Lingayen Gulf. To meet these forces, Wainwright had stationed a division at the head of the gulf, and another on the gulf's eastern coastline.[16]

The three IJA infantry regiments assigned to make the main landings were blown off course by severe weather as they moved to their landing sites on 22 December, but all managed to land near their objectives. The regiments' landing sites, originally directly

in front of where the Philippine divisions were defending, ended up further north, forcing some Philippine units to pull back to the town of Rosario, where they defended for three hours before being forced to withdraw again. Homma, unable to land his supporting tank forces as planned due to heavy seas, diverted them to the head of Lingayen Gulf, where they met little opposition. The next day the three regiments, supported by recently landed tanks, forced Philippine troops from the town of Pozorrubio, causing a withdrawal to the Ango River, a natural defensive line ten miles south of the gulf. Realizing that his forces could not stop the Japanese landings, MacArthur ordered his command to begin executing contingency plan Orange 3, which called for a withdrawal to prepared and pre-stocked positions on the Bataan Peninsula in southern Luzon, near Manila Bay. From Bataan and several well-situated islands in Manila Bay, MacArthur planned to hold out with his U.S. and Philippine forces until a force from Hawaii or Malaya could relieve them.[17]

On the morning of 24 December the remaining 7,000 men of the 16th IJA Division began landing at Lamon Bay, securing a beachhead by nightfall and gaining an excellent position from which to launch a drive on Manila. On Christmas Day, MacArthur sent his fighter planes to Bataan, reassigning any excess airmen to the infantry. He then ordered Wainwright's North Luzon Force to delay from five successive lines, D1 – D5, north of Manila to prevent remaining Philippine units from being blocked in their withdrawal to the Bataan Peninsula. Having delayed back to the D4 line on 27 December, Wainwright decided that instead of merely delaying and disrupting the advancing IJA forces, he would hold the D4 line for as long as possible. Through the skillful use of tanks in enveloping attacks, the IJA pushed Wainwright's forces back to the D5 line by 29 December. By 6 January, the Japanese had forced U.S. and Philippine forces back to the Bataan Peninsula.[18]

General Homma inadvertently gave the defenders of Bataan a three-day respite to improve their defenses before he attacked them in force. Driving forward to seize the undefended capital of Manila, Homma found that he had taken a worthless prize. Without possession of the Bataan Peninsula, the Japanese were unable to use Manila Bay. Homma also erred at this critical time by succumbing to pressure from the Southern Japanese Army to release his 48th Division a month early to the 16th Army, to provide enough combat power for Japanese forces to begin their operations against the Netherlands East Indies. He was thus left with just four infantry regiments and one tank regiment for his offensive into Bataan—a force perhaps large enough to defeat the exhausted, fleeing enemy he expected to meet, but hardly sufficient to fight nine Philippine and one U.S. division defending in depth from prepared positions. Homma would soon regret his haste in detaching the 48th Division.[19]

General Homma began his attack on Bataan on 9 January. Six days later he succeeded in forcing back the easternmost division in the first line of defense, turning the Allied line and forcing a withdrawal during which U.S. and Filipino troops had to abandon much of their artillery and transport. On 26 January, Homma struck again, this time at the second defensive line. Allied forces successfully defeated this attack; however, leaving the 14th IJA Army badly mauled. Homma, presented by his subordinate commanders with the options of waiting for a protracted period to starve out the defenders, continuing with vigorous attacks in hopes of dislodging the defenders, or pulling back long enough to regroup and reinforce, withdrew north to lick his wounds and refit.[20]

While the IJA prepared for the next offensive, the condition of the besieged defenders of Bataan deteriorated rapidly. Few supplies made it to the peninsula from the United States, and President Roosevelt ordered General MacArthur to Australia in

March. When the rested 14th IJA Army, including the newly assigned 4th IJA Division, finally attacked on 3 April, the Japanese shattered the Allied lines. To avoid having his entire command annihilated, Brigadier General William Sharp, the commander of the remaining Allied forces on Bataan, surrendered on 9 April. Japanese soldiers collected captured Allied soldiers, and the prisoners began the now-infamous Bataan Death March. Only the Allied garrison on the tiny Manila Bay island of Corregidor remained to face the Japanese.[21]

Prior to invading Corregidor Island, Homma used air strikes and artillery bombardments to destroy every building, artillery position, and fortress above ground level. The Allied defenders were forced underground, many taking shelter in the Malinta Tunnel. Japanese forces landed on 5 May, and General Wainwright began surrender negotiations by noon that day. By 9 May 1942, all organized resistance in the Philippines had ceased.[22]

The Netherlands East Indies

The Dutch Empire in Asia, the third most populous and second wealthiest European colony in the world, was Japan's main objective in the Centrifugal Offensive. Even before Yamashita's 25th Army and Homma's 14th Army had concluded their operations, the Japanese moved to seize the oil-rich islands of the Netherlands East Indies and Borneo. Decisively engaged in Malaya and Singapore, the British were able to provide only 1,000 troops, mostly Indian, and 2,500 minimally trained volunteers to defend British Borneo. The Japanese quickly overwhelmed these in a series of small landings conducted from mid-December 1941 to mid-January 1942. The seizure of the Netherlands East Indies took somewhat more effort on the part of the Japanese, but was not an operation on the scale of the invasions of the Philippines or Malaya.[23]

The Japanese conducted the Netherlands East Indies campaign in the same manner as their operations in Malaya and the Philippines. The invasion began with massive air strikes to gain air superiority. Following the destruction of the Allied air force, the Japanese launched landings to seize forward airfields to provide air support for the IJA 16th Army as it advanced. The 16th Army then made a three-pronged attack

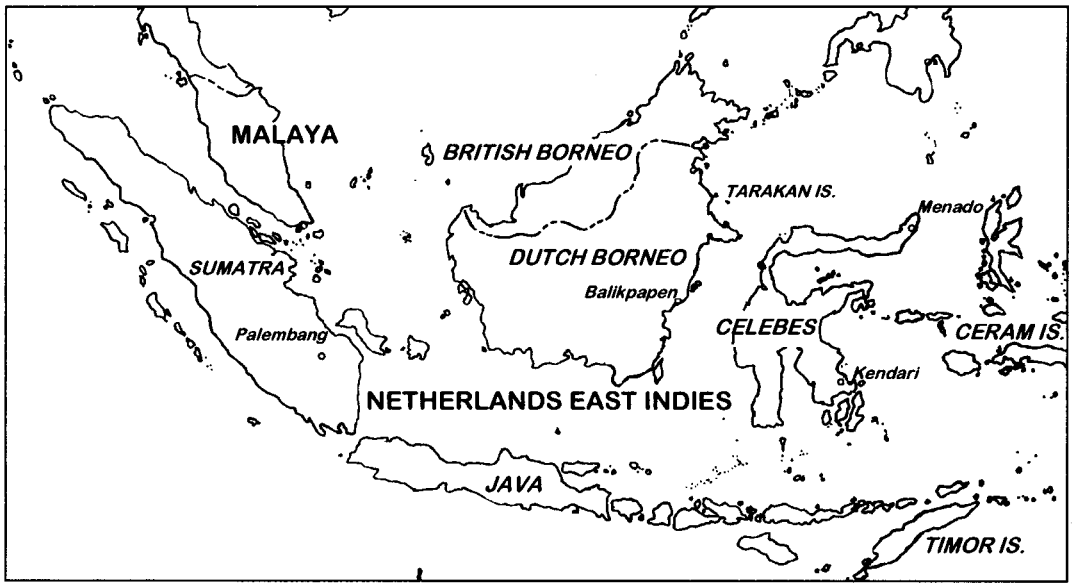


Figure 5. The Netherlands East Indies. Map based on Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Map I.

to seize the islands: the Western Force, staging from Cam Ranh Bay in Indochina, attacked Sumatra and Java; the Center Force, staging from the southern Philippines, seized Dutch Borneo; and the Eastern Force, staging from the same bases, took Celebes and Timor. The Dutch and British responded with their remaining air forces and attempted to use their limited naval assets to sink landing craft when possible.

On land, the British and Dutch attempted to defeat the IJA landings, or failing that, to destroy key airfields and oil facilities before they could fall into Japanese hands.[24]

The 16th IJA Army began its attacks on 11 January, with the Center Force attacking the oil fields at Tarakan and then Balikpapen, on Dutch Borneo, easily overrunning the Dutch garrisons. In each case, however, the Dutch successfully destroyed the oil refineries ahead of the arrival of IJA troops. By 28 January, Japanese aircraft were actively using the airfields at both locations. At the same time, the Eastern Force launched its attack on Celebes, using Naval Landing Force troops in landings and parachute assaults to seize the airstrips at Menado and Kendari, completing their seizure of Celebes and nearby Ceram Island by 9 February. Small unit landings and parachute drops continued, and the Japanese seized Timor and Sumatra by February 15, the same day as the fall of Singapore. A two-pronged assault on Java that began on February 28 pitted two IJA divisions, the 48th and the 2d, against the main Dutch force—25,000 regular troops and 40,000 home guardsmen. In addition, a small multinational unit called Blackforce aided the Dutch: three Australian battalions, 25 British light tanks, and some American artillery. As on the other islands, the Japanese swiftly defeated the units facing them. Believing the 40,000 man Japanese force to number as many as 200,000, Dutch Lieutenant General Hein ter Poorten surrendered on 8 March.[25]

The seizure of the Netherlands East Indies provided Japan with her primary goal for the Centrifugal Offensive—oil for Japanese factories and military machines. In addition, the Japanese had severed Allied lines of communication between Australia, the Philippines, and India. Although the islands became impossible for the IJN to resupply later in the war, MacArthur bypassed them during his island-hopping campaign, and they were never retaken. The Netherlands East Indies thus remained in Japanese hands until the end of the war.

Burma

Even more than in Malaya, the British were completely unprepared to defend Burma against a Japanese invasion. Believing the Burmese jungle impenetrable, British leaders doubted that any major campaign would, or could, be fought there. Japan, however, saw Burma as crucial to her operations in China. For the Japanese, seizure of Burma would shut off the "Burma Road" land supply route over which the Allies had been supplying Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese Army. Additionally, it would protect the rear of General Yamashita's 25th Army in Malaya, and secure the western flank of the Japanese Southern Army in Southeast Asia. It would also open the door for an invasion of India, should Japan choose to expand the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."[26]

As in the other campaigns of the Centrifugal Offensive, Japanese forces initially concentrated on gaining air superiority and forward air bases to support further advances. The first small Japanese strikes seized the southern Burmese airfields at Victoria Point, on 11 December, and Tavoy, on 19 January. To protect the vital port of Rangoon, the British moved the bulk of their forces into southern Burma. This was a risky move, however, because a Japanese force attacking into central or northern Burma could easily contain these forces. As the British positioned their units, Lieutenant General Shojiro Iida's Japanese 15th Army began concentrating its two divisions for an attack on Rangoon, which would cut off Allied forces in Burma.[27]

Over Rangoon, for the first time in the Centrifugal Offensive the Japanese failed to gain air superiority. The pilots of the Royal Air Force and the famed U.S. "Flying Tigers," despite their inferior aircraft, inflicted such heavy damage that they forced the Japanese to switch from daytime bomber and fighter attacks to ineffective nighttime harassment raids.[28]

Without their usual air superiority, the 15th Army began its invasion on 20 January, capturing the town of Moulmein on the 30th. The advance continued in the

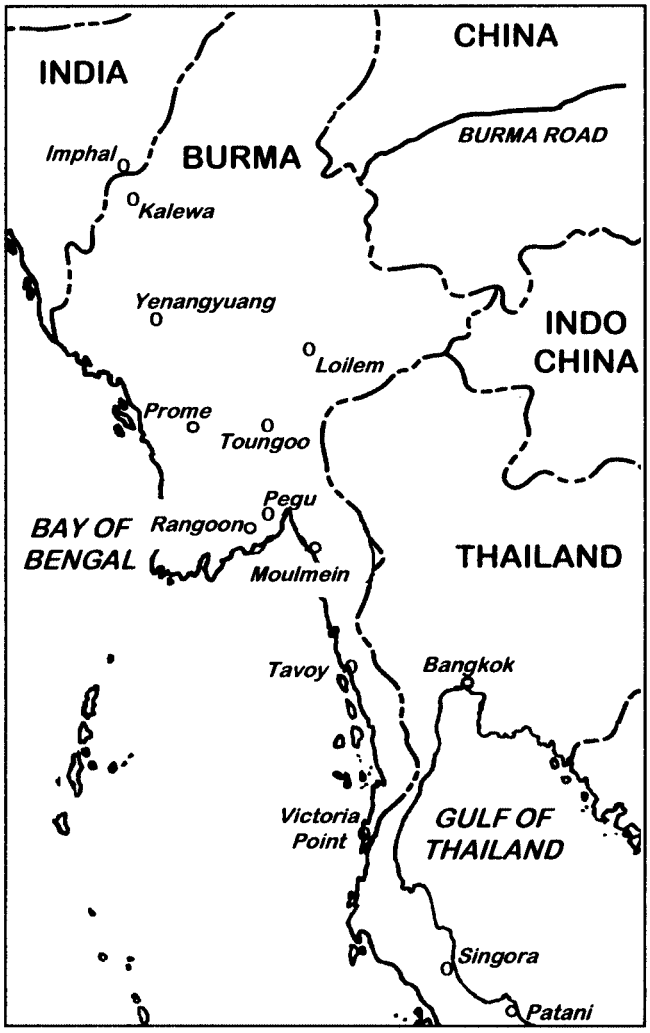


Figure 6. Burma. Map based on Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific, Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), Map I.

face of limited resistance, finally slowing in front of the British positions at the Sittang River on 21 February. Forced to halt temporarily while its bridging elements caught up

with the rest of the army, the 15th Army used this time to resupply its units for the first time in more than a month. On 3 March the Japanese crossed the Sittang River in force, moving to surround Pegu and strike toward the oil refineries east of Rangoon. Two days later, Pegu taken, Iida ordered his 33d Division to take Rangoon, while the 55th Division pushed north to seize Toungoo. The 33d Division reached Rangoon on 8 March. At one point on the advance they had most of the Allied forces in Burma bottled up and ripe to be captured, but, not knowing this, they let the opportunity pass. They finally seized Rangoon a day after the British had abandoned the port. The fall of Rangoon gave the Japanese an excellent resupply port, while denying its use to the Allies. As there were no roads linking Burma and India, this loss also closed the overland supply route for the British and Chinese Nationalist armies, leaving aerial resupply as the only remaining option.[29]

On 7 March, Southern Army ordered General Iida to destroy the remaining Allied forces in Burma, which by then consisted of the Burma Corps, located in the Irrawaddy Valley near Prome, the Chinese 5th Army in the Sittang Valley near Toungoo, and the Chinese 6th Army in the east. To assist General Iida, the 15th IJA Army was reinforced with the 18th Division, the 56th Division, and two tank regiments. Additionally, Iida's air forces now totaled 420 aircraft.[30]

The Japanese first attacked the Chinese 5th Army, near Toungoo, on 19 March. On 30 March, the Chinese were forced to abandon their heavy equipment to break out of the Japanese encirclement. Burma Corps, in the west, faced heavy attacks from 28 March to 3 April, and fell back to the oil fields at Yenangyaung, where they attempted to hold a defensive line. On 23 April, however, fighting through weak resistance from the Chinese 6th Army, the 56th IJA Division took Loilem, turning the Allied western flank. As the front began to collapse, General Alexander, the commander in Burma, ordered the

surviving British forces into India and sent his Chinese forces back to China to regroup. This began the longest retreat in British history. By 20 May, General Iida had possession of Burma, and the IJA was now able to bomb the port of Calcutta. Were it not for the beginning of the monsoon season, the 15th Army could have driven into India as well.[31]

Trends

In just over five months, eleven Imperial Japanese Army divisions chased America and the European colonial powers out of Asia, achieving all of Japan's objectives for the Pacific War. There were several major setbacks, notable at Bataan and Rangoon. Nonetheless, they accomplished this despite their severely limited logistics structure, their insufficient number of reserve divisions for contingencies, their lack of familiarity with jungle warfare, and their army's focus on the Soviet Union as the primary adversary. Strategically, of course, Japan had made a grave error in challenging the might and will of America and Great Britain—Burma was Japan's last major victory. Tactically, however, the IJA's achievements seem almost miraculous. What made it all possible?

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[2] Hayashi and Coox, 25 and 31.

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[4] Palit, 18-19; and Bradley, 67.

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CHAPTER 3

CONSCRIPTION AND TRAINING

An essential factor in any military operation is the level of training of the soldiers and units involved. Aggressive action by competent soldiers can often make a flawed plan succeed, while a brilliant plan executed by weak, unskilled troops will inevitably fail. After the Centrifugal Offensive, the IJA was said by Western sources to have created its "jungle supermen" through years of careful, surreptitious preparation. Allied leaders claimed that their swift advances through Southeast Asia were due to extensive specialized training in jungle and night operations. Was this the case? An examination of the IJA's conscription system, soldier and leader development, unit level exercises, and mission-specific training for the Centrifugal Offensive reveals the "jungle superman's" true strengths and weaknesses.

The Japanese Conscription and Reserve System

Japan had arguably the most efficient conscription and reserve system of all of the major powers during World War II. The armed forces divided the entire country into conscription districts; each administered by a local military affairs clerk. All Japanese males aged seventeen to forty years old were liable for call-up, and there were very few exemptions or deferments. Each year, army doctors examined all twenty-year-olds, and assigned each a physical category. In peacetime, the Army only conscripted Category A men—examinees at least five feet tall and in top physical condition. In each district, the names of Category A candidates were placed in a lottery, and enough names to fill upcoming vacancies in the local regiment were randomly selected. Once selected, a conscript would normally serve a two-year enlistment. In peacetime, the odds were against being conscripted—in 1937, only 150,000 men were conscripted out of 750,000

Category A candidates. Those not conscripted received four months of basic training and then transferred to the Conscript Reserve, one of the three Japanese reserve manpower pools. The Army could call personnel in the conscript reserves to duty in time of war. In peacetime they reported for an annual muster, and could be called up for no more than thirty-five additional days each year. Soldiers remained in the conscript reserve for seventeen years and four months, and then transferred to another reserve manpower pool, the First National Army, until they were forty years old.[1]

Conscripts served for two years, usually in a local regiment, after which they spent 15 years in the First Reserve (a reserve component composed entirely of former regular army soldiers), where they were subject to an annual inspection muster and possible active service call-ups. After their fifteen years' service in the First Reserve, soldiers were assigned to the First National Army until their 40th birthday.[2]

This conscript and reserve system served Japan well. After the war started, the Army extended regular enlistments to three years, and only granted exemptions to skilled technicians in critical wartime occupations, such as the aviation industry, arsenals, and munitions factories. In addition to the 750,000 men who annually came of age for military service during the war, at the beginning of the war Japan had perhaps two million fully trained, if rusty, soldiers in the First Reserve. Additionally, she could call upon millions more in the Conscript Reserves and the First National Army if necessary. Most of these served during the war, some multiple times. One can judge the effectiveness of the Japanese conscription and reserve system by its ability to rapidly produce combat units. In 1936, the IJA was at its peacetime strength of 17 divisions. Between 1937 and 1941, it expanded to a force of 56 divisions, and by the end of the war, there were 107 IJA divisions. Nearly two thirds of the forces that took part in the Centrifugal Offensive were not from regular divisions—they were in units formed

between 1937 and 1941. This expansion did not come without a cost. By the end of the war, in at least one village, the local military affairs clerk was the only man left—all of the others had gone to war.[3]

Preinduction Training

A student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in the mid-1930s noted that if one understood the mental traits of the Japanese soldier, he did not need to study those of the Japanese citizen—the two were identical.[4] Indeed, to an outsider, Japan appeared to have turned the truism that "an army reflects its parent



Figure 7. High school students at drill. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 2.

society" on its head. Instead, Japanese society strongly reflected the Imperial Japanese Army.

All Japanese learned from birth to respect their seniors. This hierarchical social education started with the family, where the father received his meals first, went to the

family bath first, and answered the deep bows of his family with a curt nod. The conditioning continued in school, where standardized formal military training and drill began in the third grade. The Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 governed all classroom instruction, placing the ethical development of young Japanese citizens ahead of the pursuit of knowledge. In addition to patriotic moral education, middle school, high school, and university students received two hours a week of marksmanship training and basic military instruction from specially assigned regular army officers, and went on four to six days of maneuvers annually. Further, because soldiers served in regiments near their hometowns,[5] a soldier was always within sight of his peers, family, and neighbors. Army service was an important part of a young Japanese man's moral development as a citizen. By the time a Japanese conscript arrived at his regiment to begin his term of service, he had already received a significant amount of military training, and was well prepared for military life.[6]

Conscript Training

Those Category A men chosen by lottery to be conscripted reported, often accompanied by their families, to their local regiments early on the morning of 10 January. Before their arrival the local military affairs clerk had quietly forwarded the regimental commander a full report on each conscript's background, including any prior disciplinary problems, whether anyone in the conscript's family had been a criminal, and how wealthy or influential the conscript's family was.[7]

Upon completion of the initial regimental roll call of new conscripts, unit medical personnel gave them a quick medical examination to confirm that the new soldiers still met Category A standards. This accomplished, the senior enlisted soldiers of the companies—those who had been conscripted the previous year—escorted the

conscripts to the barracks. In the barracks, the second year men helped the new soldiers select uniforms from piles of old "small," "medium," and "large" jackets and trousers in the center of the barracks' open bays. After dressing in their uniforms and tidying their areas, the new conscript "guests" were served lunch by their second-year "host" soldiers. They would continue to be guests for perhaps two more days, after which their treatment would change drastically.[8]

Following lunch, each newly filled company would assemble on the parade ground, where the company commander would welcome the men to the unit and swear them in. The commander's welcome speech usually emphasized the familial nature of the rifle company, capitalizing on the soldiers' pre-army socialization. The commander was the father, while the company officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and second-year soldiers were the conscripts' "older brothers." The soldiers' living arrangements further reinforced this theme of family. Each company lived in a separate barracks building. The first floor of the building was for administrative offices and the living areas of the company officers. Field grade officers did not live in barracks—they usually lived in private homes in the adjoining town. NCOs lived on the second floor, while soldiers lived in the open bays of the upper floors; usually ten to fifteen conscripts paired with the same number of second-year soldiers in each bay. The open bay rooms had beds and shelves for the soldiers' equipment on both sides, and a long table bisected the room, where the troops normally took their meals. The company would often gather in a central place for monthly "family dinners," where the unit's officers would preside over an evening of singing and skits.[9]

The IJA training year had three parts. January through April, the first training period, was devoted to instructing the new men in basic soldier skills. Soldiers of any army will quickly recognize many parts of this four-month basic training period. The

focus of the new conscripts' training was on individual proficiency, obedience to orders, and self discipline. Additionally, the soldiers had to quickly get used to an alien,



Figure 8. Machine gun crew drills. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare*, Information Bulletin No. 6 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 9 January 1942), Figure 4.

unfamiliar military culture. While the hierarchical nature of military life was familiar, possibly even comforting to the conscripts, there was much new to learn as well. Throughout the world, soldiers have their own vernacular. The IJA was no different. In addition to instruction about ranks, drill, and weapons, new soldiers learned that in the IJA, what they had referred to as a "jacket" in civil life was now called simply "military clothing," "slippers" had become "upper leathers," and the coin they had previously called "one sen" had turned into "one centimeter," while a yen was now a "meter." Even after they understood the soldier's vernacular, however, new soldiers suffered the age-old fear that comes of not being able to decipher NCOs' parade ground drill commands, which were often a series of totally incomprehensible grunts. The new men were no

longer “guests,” either, and any misstep or hint of sloppiness was quickly corrected with a remedial slap or punch from a second-year “older brother”—sometimes more than two hundred strikes a day. Officially, there were no “private punishments” in the IJA. In fact, units handled most disciplinary issues within the “family,” rather than formally.[10]

Units began to inculcate the ever-important Japanese fighting spirit in their conscripts through the medium of close combat training. One of the IJA’s core beliefs was that Japanese soldiers were naturally superior in bayonet fighting and grappling, and conscripts spent a significant amount of time perfecting their skills against each other with wooden practice rifles. In addition to their regular training, many soldiers practiced both bayonet and unarmed combat in their rare off duty hours. Battalions and regiments held unit bayonet competitions twice a year, but seldom conducted inter-regimental contests for fear of developing rivalries between units.[11]

All soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army, regardless of specialty, underwent the same basic training. The soldiers’ training began with basic drill, to get the company to move as a unit instead of as a group of individuals. When the soldiers had mastered basic drill, they were ceremonially “lent” rifles by the company commander, on behalf of the Emperor. After giving a short speech explaining the honor and responsibility of receiving one of the Emperor’s rifles, the company commander called the soldiers forward one at a time. Each soldier stepped forward, bowed to the rifle his commander held, took the rifle, touched it to his forehead, stepped back, presented arms, and returned to his place in the company formation.[12]

Combatives instruction and the reference to the Emperor during the conscripts’ initial rifle issue were not the only spiritual training[13] the soldiers received. Each morning, soldiers recited from memory the Emperor’s Rescript for Soldiers and Sailors, which underlined the importance of loyalty, duty, valor, and obedience. To avoid both

embarrassment and beatings, many conscripts memorized the Rescript before ever reporting to their units. In addition to reciting the Rescript, soldiers underwent practical spiritual training as well. To prove that their spirits were stronger than Japan's summer heat, soldiers practiced bayonet drills in the mid-afternoon heat. To similarly demonstrate spiritual superiority over the cold, units often marched through freezing



Figure 9. Model 95 light tanks fording shallow water. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 8 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 7 February 1942), Figure 6.

streams in winter. To strengthen the legs of the soldiers of this foot-bound army, soldiers marched for tens of miles in conditioning marches. These marches sometimes were purposely routed past famous battle or historical sites, to remind the men of the superior spirit of Japan's ancient samurai, and to underline the soldiers' connection to this tradition. To learn to conquer fatigue, the men would frequently end these long equipment marches with double time laps in formation around the company area. Fallouts, of course, were beaten until their morale improved.[14]

The new soldiers gradually mastered their skills, and they usually received a promotion from recruit (private second class) to private first class after six months with their regiment. Following completion of the basic training cycle, the soldiers would participate in progressively larger unit training exercises, culminating in the annual autumn Grand Maneuvers. At the end of November, the second-year soldiers mustered out. Following a short ceremony in which the Regimental Commander encouraged the soldiers to continue to be loyal to the Emperor and their country, the men joined their families outside of the camp gate, and officially passed into the ranks of the First Reserve, their term of service completed. The junior soldiers, now newly minted second-year men, began their preparations for the reception of the next year's draft of conscripts, and the cycle began again in January.[15]

Noncommissioned Officer Selection and Training

Noncommissioned officers came from three sources in the IJA: technical branch youth apprentice schools, the reserve officer candidate system, and promotion from the ranks. Youth apprentices began their training at fourteen or fifteen years old; a minimum age that the government lowered after the war began. Following two years of training in signal, tank, artillery, or ordnance skills (or three years of aviation training), they joined the army in the grade of superior private. After a six-month probationary period, they advanced to corporal. Another route to the NCO ranks was through the reserve officer candidate system. Conscripts with at least two years of high school could become reserve officer candidates after three months of training with their regiments. After becoming reserve officer candidates, the conscripts underwent three additional months' training, after which they took an examination that determined whether they would attend a one-year NCO school or the regular course for reserve officer candidates. Finally, unit

leaders could select soldiers with sufficient time in grade from the ranks for promotion to the NCO grades for diligent performance. Generally, NCOs in the latter category did not advance to higher grades as quickly as those who had attended one of the various NCO schools. As in most armies of the era, NCOs lived with their troops and were responsible for lower level individual and collective training.[16] There does not appear to have any higher level formal schooling for NCOs after they assumed regimental duties.

Officer Selection and Training

The officer corps of the IJA consisted of regular and reserve officers. Either regular line officers were graduates of the five-year Military Academy regular course of instruction or they were former warrant officer/NCO graduates of a one-year course at the Military Academy. All regular officers received thorough training in both general military subjects and branch-specific skills. Reserve officer candidates selected for commissioned officer training went to units for six months of initial officer training, after which each attended an eleven month long course in his basic branch. Branch-specific courses taught reserve officer candidates the army's training regulations, tactical theory, and provided some basic field work on tactical problems. A high percentage of World War II IJA officers were graduates of the reserve officer training program. After completion of their training, both regular and reserve officers served as probationary officers in their units for two to six months.[17]

In addition to their regular schooling, fifty to seventy Military Academy graduates in the grade of first lieutenant or captain, with less than eight years of commissioned service, attended either a one- or three-year course at the General Staff College. This course taught advanced tactical theory through map exercises, and each student studied a foreign language. Forty percent of the graduates returned to tactical units, the same

number remained at the College as instructors, and twenty percent received assignments to serve on the War Department staff. Students gained attendance to the school based on their scores on a competitive written and oral examination. Because General Staff College graduates normally advanced more rapidly than their peers did, competition on the entrance examination was fierce. There was no other advanced schooling for Japanese officers.[18]

In their units, officers trained constantly. To inculcate the proper warrior spirit, officers practiced *kendo*[19] fencing for an hour in the morning, and they divided their

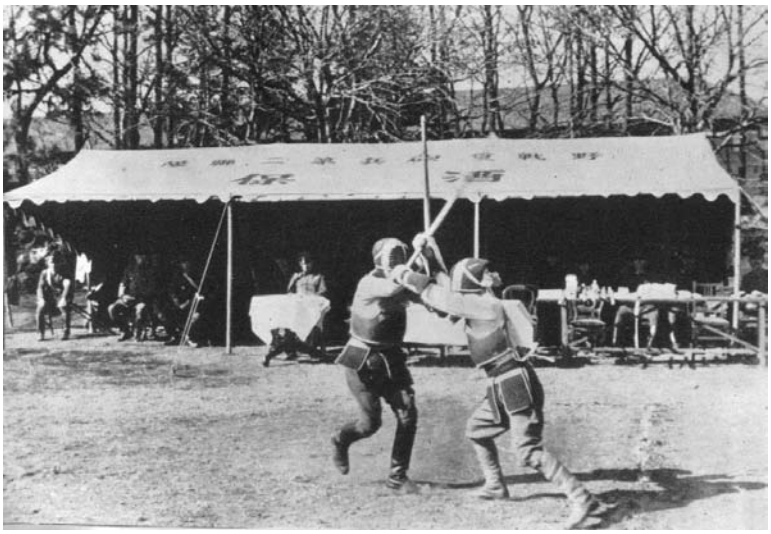


Figure 10. Officers practicing *kendo. Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 6.

afternoon lunch hour into five minutes of eating and 55 minutes of tactical lectures. When their soldiers drilled with bayonets during the summer afternoon heat in endurance building exercises, the officers practiced with swords alongside them. In the field, they prided themselves on sharing the same hardships as their men. On occasion,

when an officer was unable to meet the exacting standards expected of him, even if his shortcomings were due solely to a temporary illness or injury, he commit *seppuku*,[20] or ritual suicide. As a result, IJA officers were at least as tough and well trained in their duties as their men were in theirs.[21]

Unit Training

The conscripts' basic training period concluded at the end of April, at which time the companies within a regiment had completed their necessary individual training. This individual training provided the basis for the prescribed unit collective training. In the infantry, from May until July units trained at progressively higher echelons, working on tasks from squad, platoon, and company level. This collective training required great endurance on the part of the officers and men, based as it was on the belief that offensive action, rapid marching over long distances, and surprise gained by night attacks were the essential elements of tactical success. Infantry units practiced penetrating an enemy position in depth, seizing key hills, towns, and tactical objectives. In sharp contrast to garrison procedures, standardization in equipment and march interval was unimportant as long as the soldiers maintained their rapid forward momentum. Units seldom conducted combined arms operations, as conventional wisdom dictated that the infantry could win decisive victory by itself.[22]

Supporting artillery, tank, and engineer regiments conducted specialized training during the second training period. Although the training taught soldiers the technical skills they needed, it also stressed infantry-style endurance. As an example, while engineer units trained extensively on bridging operations and obstacle breaching, they also spent hours digging from standing and lying positions. Such training not only taught IJA engineers to perform tasks they would have to execute in combat; it also built tough,

disciplined soldiers. The infantry trained to endure hardship and overcome adversity, and the other branches trained to support the infantry.[23]

On a typical field training exercise, an infantry company began its foot movement at 2100 hours and reached its destination twenty-five miles away at 0700 hours the following morning, marching the entire time through a driving rainstorm. For two days, the platoons within the company worked on their three most usual forms of maneuver—flank attacks, double envelopments, and frontal assaults. At 0400 hours on the third day, they started marching back to their base, arriving at 1400 hours, the hottest part of the day. To prove to the soldiers that they were not as tired as they thought they were, the company commander led the unit in a jog around the camp perimeter. The troops slept little in the field, conducting constant night patrols instead. In the words of the company commander, "They already know how to sleep. They need training in how to stay awake."[24]

In addition to providing soldiers valuable training in "how to stay awake," night operations provided IJA units with a method by which they could at least partially avoid strong enemy defensive fires, as it is more difficult for units to use supporting arms effectively in the dark. The IJA believed that by forcing an enemy to fight in close combat at night, they would be assured of victory, as darkness was the best time to capitalize on bayonet and sword attacks and quick marching—two key parts of IJA infantry training. Consequently, units spent as much as one fourth of their time training for night combat. IJA units trained for night operations systematically, sometimes as a special task, but usually in concert with the unit's daylight training. Night training initially concentrated on individual skills such as noise prevention, navigation, and trail marking. From here units conducted attacks at various levels. Leaders seldom planned artillery preparation of a night objective, as the barrage would sacrifice surprise. A tank often

accompanied each company to deal with wire obstacles and heavy weapons, and units moved in concentrated formations for both control and morale.[25]

The final three months of the IJA's annual training cycle focused on battalion and higher level training. The training year culminated in November with the annual autumn Grand Maneuvers, the year's most important exercise, which the Emperor attended and observed with keen interest. Regiments and smaller units usually conducted training exercises locally to avoid the expense of moving units. Therefore, division and higher commanders had few opportunities to maneuver large combined arms formations. Consequently, although units used unrealistic and outdated battle tactics in the Grand Maneuvers, senior commanders wanting to demonstrate their tactical prowess to their superiors had to perform well. After the Grand Maneuvers, regiments dispersed, returning to their local bases and preparing to muster out their second-year conscripts, who were nearing the end of their terms of service.[26]

While training at all levels was strenuous, and led to aggressive units well trained for the offense, the exclusive focus on offensive operations had some drawbacks. For one, units refused to admit even the possibility of defensive operations, so they never trained in them. This created a training weakness that would be difficult to overcome in combat. Additionally, the stress on rapid offensive action made it difficult for commanders to keep a reserve—units designated as a reserve frequently left their assembly areas to join the attack, not wanting to be left out. For "blitzkrieg" style infantry attacks, however, the IJA was among the best armies of its day.[27]

Predeployment Training

Although Western sources, including Winston Churchill in his postwar account of the period, attributed Japanese success to extensive specialized training, the IJA

actually prepared very little for the Centrifugal Offensive. For reasons discussed previously, the IJA did not begin even the most rudimentary intelligence preparation of Southeast Asia until early 1941, when it formed the Taiwan Army Research Unit, more commonly called the *Doro Nawa*[28] unit, in Taipei, Formosa. The thirty men of *Doro Nawa* compiled all necessary data about the effects of a tropical environment on combat operations—unit organization, tactics, effects on equipment, and a myriad of other details. They also gathered extensive information about Allied forces in Southeast Asia and carefully studied the terrain of the region. Within six months, they were able to test their ideas with an amphibious training exercise by an infantry battalion, an artillery battery, and supporting engineers. Based on their conclusions, they reorganized the units designated to invade Malaya and the Philippine Islands, and produced a small pamphlet on jungle warfare entitled "Read This Alone and the War Can be Won," to be issued to the soldiers after they embarked on their troop ships. Aside from some limited amphibious landing practice, reading this pamphlet was the only preparatory training that units at the tactical level conducted. The pamphlet was outstanding—a brief, clear explanation of Japan's reasons for invading, standards of conduct for individual soldiers, and various tactics, techniques, and procedures for tropical fighting. Still, reading a pamphlet hardly qualifies as extensive preparation for an operation of the magnitude of the Centrifugal Offensive.[29]

Trends

The Japanese had several clear training strengths that they were able to capitalize on in the early part of World War II in the Pacific. First, despite Japan's relatively small population, the IJA was better configured than any of the other major combatant nations to rapidly expand into a much larger, but still reasonably well trained

force. The Japanese conscription and reserve system obviated the need for the regular establishment to set up large training camps for newly inducted soldiers. Instead, the IJA was able to efficiently double in size, then double again, virtually overnight. There



Figure 11. Gun crew moving a 70-mm Battalion Gun. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare. Information Bulletin No. 9,* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 22 February 1942), 13.

was naturally a point where this seemingly endless well of trained soldiers would run dry, but that was several years into the future in 1941--a future that was not supposed to include further armed conflict.

The IJA's system of leader schooling was surprisingly extensive—the U.S. Army's "90-day wonder" second lieutenant and "shake and bake" sergeant had no Japanese counterpart. After more than a year of qualification training, new IJA officers and NCOs had learned what the military establishment wanted them to learn, and could do their jobs capably. Further, because the IJA conducted its officer training centrally instead of delegating it to the various branches, officers of different specialties at the

tactical level experienced little doctrinal confusion when they had to work together in combat.

Complementing the efficient IJA leader development system, the IJA's training system in the infantry regiments produced highly skilled soldiers. Because leaders represented the rifle company structure to a soldier as merely an extension of his highly stratified family, unit cohesion was high. Additionally, the strenuous, mission focused, sometimes brutal training that the units conducted toughened the IJA soldier for the conditions he would have to endure in battle. The soldier was also linked, through his spiritual training, to the nation's leadership, making their objectives his. The IJA's spiritual training also created in the soldiers' minds the idea that, if they tried hard enough, they were invincible, regardless of the odds. If an IJA private was stronger than sun and ice, how could mere machines stop him?

There were dangerous weaknesses inherent in the Japanese system, but these, though hinted at during the Centrifugal Offensive, did not fully manifest themselves until later in the war. First of all, junior IJA leaders understood the strategic "commander's intent" of their army—to advance rapidly until achieving victory—but they often were unable to see the advantage of following their regimental or battalion commanders' plans, when these plans kept them from participating in an attack. Disobedience of orders does not seem to have been a major crime if it was disobedience of an order not to attack—this was viewed instead as merely an indiscretion caused by having a properly developed "warrior spirit." Therefore, small units in the IJA were more than capable of exploiting enemy weaknesses, even in the absence of communications with their higher headquarters, but these same units were extremely difficult to synchronize when the need arose. Another training weakness centered on the peacetime IJA's practice of conducting most training at or below the regimental level. Because

peacetime division commanders were normally remote from their subordinate units, not only did they lack experience, and presumably skill, at maneuvering large units, they appear to have been unaware of, or used to, this shortcoming.

There seems to be little truth in the contention of Allied leaders that the IJA secretly conducted specialized training in preparation for the Centrifugal Offensive. Some units appear to have conducted limited tropical and amphibious training at the last minute, but it was enough. Across the board, units conducted night combat training, useful in heavy jungle where the triple canopy often blocks most sunlight, extensively, but this had been part of the IJA's training for decades before the invasion of Southeast Asia.

In short, the IJA's training served it well in its fast, mobile campaign through the jungles of Southeast Asia during the Centrifugal Offensive. It is unimportant that this preparation was accidental, focused as it was against a totally different enemy. The Japanese approach to infantry training had severe weaknesses, especially at the higher echelons. However, these weaknesses were neither readily apparent nor especially important in the jungle fighting in Southeast Asia in 1941, where small unit operations were the only operations that mattered.

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[1] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 2 - 4; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Recruiting and Replacement System* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1945), 1-5; Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 121 - 123; Eric Bergerud, *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 126 and 130; Infantry Journal, *The Jap Soldier* (Washington: The Infantry Journal, 1943), 19-21; and Drea, 78 - 80.

[2] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 2 - 3; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Recruiting and Replacement System,* 51; and Infantry Journal, 19.

[3] W. Victor Madej, *Japanese Armed Forces Order of Battle, 1937-1945,* vol. 1 (Allentown: Game Marketing Company, 1981), 22 - 121; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 2; Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, 126; and Drea, 78.

[4] Bonner F. Fellers, "Attitude of Japan Toward Her Army: Sudden Rise of Japan" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command and General Staff School, 1935), 27.

[5] Except for the various Imperial Guards regiments and the two divisions permanently stationed in Korea, which recruited nationwide.

[6] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 52; Meiron and Susan Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 40-41; Fellers, 19; Cook, 50; and U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 5.

[7] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 3; Drea, 78; Cook, 123; and Bergerud, 126.

[8] Masato Tanaka, *Zukai Nihon Rikugun (Hohei Hen)* (Illustrated Japanese Military--Infantry) (Tokyo: Namiki Books, 1996), 23 - 25; and Shunju Morimatsu, *Teikoku Rikugun,* (The Imperial Japanese Army) (Tokyo: Shoei, 1995), 86 - 90.

[9] Harold Doud, "Six Months With the Japanese Infantry" (*Infantry Journal:* January-February 1937), 21; Drea, 81; Tanaka, 24 - 25; and Morimatsu, 87, 104.

[10] Frank Gibney, *Senso: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War* (Armonki, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 54; Drea, 82 - 86; Bergerud, 128; and Morimatsu, 93, 96.

[11] Malcolm Duncan Kennedy, *The Military Side of Japanese Life* (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1924), 67-68.

[12] Tanaka, 26; and Doud, 21.

[13] , *seishin kyoiku,* education of the mind or spirit.

[14] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, Combat *Lessons Gained from Overseas Operations* (Washington: 23 June 1945), 21; Morimatsu, 95; Drea, 82; Kennedy, 59; Infantry Journal, 36; Fellers, 22; and Doud, 18.

[15] Doud, 20; and Kennedy, 59.

[16] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 4-8; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Recruiting and Replacement System,* 36-37; and Thompson, 22.

[17] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 4-6; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Recruiting and Replacement System,* 34-36; and Bergerud, 128.

[18] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Combat Lessons Gained from Overseas Operations*, 34; Theodore Failor Cook, Jr., *The Japanese Officer Corps: The Making of a Military Elite, 1972 – 1945* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1987), 370, 419; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 6; and Kennedy, 134.

[19] ▼◀◀, *kendo,* lit. “the way of the sword,” Japanese fencing.

[20] ▶▶⏮, *seppuku,* lit. “cutting of the stomach.” Reversed, the characters yield the more vulgar reading, *hara kiri.*

[21] Doud, 18; Bergerud, 128; and Kennedy, 39 and 63.

[22] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Combat Lessons Gained from Overseas Operations,* 31; Kennedy, 81; Fellers, 29, 38, and 41; and Drea, 87.

[23] Gotaro Ogawa, *Conscription System in Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), 148; and United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese Engineers* (Delhi: Government of India Press, May, 1944), 4.

[24] Doud, 19 - 20; and Tanaka, 32.

[25] U.S. Army, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East, and Eighth U.S. Army, Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, *Japanese Night Combat,* Part 1 (Tokyo: 1955), 2 - 8, 51, and 81 - 83.

[26] Kennedy, 32, 38, 179, and 355; and Drea, 87.

[27] Fellers, 30 - 31.

[28] ▁🎗, *doro nawa,* lit. "robber's rope," taken from a Japanese saying about the foolishness of making a rope to tie a robber after, rather than before, you've caught him.

[29] U.S. Army, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East, and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), *The Invasion of the Netherlands East Indies,* 21; and Tsuji, 4 - 33 and 318 - 339.

CHAPTER 4

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The Japanese divisions that took part in the Centrifugal Offensive carried equipment designed for use in a war against the Soviet Army on the plains of Manchuria. This equipment varied widely both in quality and adaptability to the Southeast Asian jungles. Many items, such as the engineers' infantry assault bridges, were brilliant examples of Japanese innovation. Other items, like the various tanks the Japanese landed in Malaya, won by default—the IJA faced no allied armor. Still other equipment, like the Type 11[1] squad light machine gun (LMG) was inferior by any standards. During Japan's initial period of industrialization in the early 1900s, the relatively weak Japanese industrial base limited the quality of domestically produced equipment. Later, the IJA's perception of material goods as corrupting influences kept the ground forces from fully exploiting the modern manufacturing capability that had produced the Air Arm's outstanding Zero fighter plane and the IJN's superior battleships. This factor, combined with the IJA's doctrinal focus on an offensive, infantry-based army, led the Japanese to adopt lightweight, often unsophisticated equipment, with varying degrees of success.

Individual Equipment

To an infantryman, one of the chief virtues a piece of equipment can have is light weight. As a mobile, infantry-based force, the IJA outfitted its soldiers with excellent lightweight gear, and required them to carry the minimum equipment necessary. Unlike Western armies, the Japanese placed little importance on the standardization of individual equipment in the field. Soldiers carried whatever they felt was necessary to accomplish their mission, often including privately procured or indigenous items.[2]

The usual load an IJA infantryman carried during this period was a steel helmet, a belt with at least one ammunition pouch, a bayonet, a light pack, and an entrenching



Figure 12. Infantry individual equipment. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 34.

tool. Soldiers wore a wide variety of footwear, and socks were usually heelless, probably to slow deterioration. To assist in crossing water obstacles, many infantrymen carried the inflatable belt they had worn during the initial amphibious landings. Most soldiers had a 1-yard x 1 1/2-yard camouflage net that they could drape over their bodies and stuff with foliage to render themselves virtually invisible in the jungle. The only piece of equipment that seemed to be standard among all soldiers was the waterproof shelter half, which they wore instead of the army issue raincoat during inclement weather.[3] Clearly, the Japanese infantryman's individual equipment was well suited for a fast-moving, mobile campaign in the tropics.

Infantry Rifle

An infantryman's most important piece of equipment in battle is his rifle. Company commanders ceremonially presented their soldiers with their rifles at the end of the unit's basic training period. Bearing the Imperial chrysanthemum, the rifle was an almost holy object, and the Japanese infantryman was exhorted to treat his like his own soul—keeping it clean and unsullied. The IJA soldier may often have been an unskilled marksman, but he almost without exception kept the personal weapon the Emperor had lent him clean and well cared for.[4]

The primary infantry weapon of the IJA for the entire Pacific War was the 6.5 millimeter (mm) Type 38 Arisaka rifle, a 1904 modification to the rifle the IJA used during

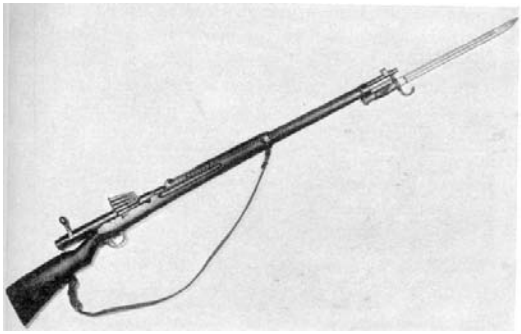


Figure 13. Type 38 6.5-mm rifle with five round "stripper clip" and bayonet. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 31.

the Russo-Japanese War. Most armies had stopped using the 6.5-mm round in favor of a more powerful 7.7-mm one after the poor showing of the 6.5-mm bullet in Tripoli in the hands of Italian troops in 1911-12. Japanese industry, however, was initially unable to produce a weapon capable of withstanding the shock of firing the heavier round. Therefore, Japanese factories produced thousands of Type 38s to arm the IJA.

Because Japanese factories were unable to construct well-machined rifle barrels, the Arisaka had an unusually long barrel to gain acceptable accuracy. At 50.25 inches, it was the longest infantry rifle in the world in 1941. The Type 38's length also made it one of the world's heaviest infantry rifles, weighing nearly ten pounds. The length and weight of the Arisaka made it an awkward weapon, difficult for the diminutive IJA soldier to aim, especially in the jungle. The rifle's firing mechanism further complicated the aiming problem. Although based on the firing mechanism of the reliable 1898 German Mauser, the Type 38's clumsy bolt-head safety and an equally clumsy straight bolt handle caused soldiers to lose sight of their targets while re-cocking the rifle.[5]

Table 1. IJA Small Arms

Nomenclature	Caliber	Magazine Type and Capacity	Maximum Rate of Fire	Effective Range	Weight
Type 38 Rifle 1905	6.5-mm	5 (box)	NA	360 meters	9 lbs 4 oz
Type 11 LMG 1922	6.5-mm	30 (hopper)	500 rpm	1500 meters	22 lbs 8 oz
Model 96 LMG 1936	6.5-mm	30 (box)	550 rpm	1500 meters	20 lbs
Model 92 HMG 1932	7.7-mm	30 (strip)	450 rpm	1370 meters	61 lbs (122 lbs with tripod)

Source: U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 30, 89-91, 97-98, 117-119.

Despite its shortcomings, the Type 38 had its good points as well. The rifle had a high hit rate, with reasonable accuracy to 360 meters. Its weak 6.5-mm round produced little recoil or report, and the long barrel almost completely absorbed the round's powder and muzzle flash, giving it virtually no signature. The bullets, loaded into the rifle from

"stripper clips" of five rounds each, tumbled in flight because of their light weight and the rifle barrel's poor machining. Ironically, this tumbling produced severe entry and exit wounds, actually increasing the lethality of the weapon. Thus, despite its awkwardness and *because of* its shortcomings, the Type 38 was well suited to the close-quarters jungle combat of the Pacific War and was very popular with IJA soldiers.[6]

Machine Guns

The IJA formed its individual infantrymen into rifle squads built around the five-man LMG section. IJA units used two types of LMGs during the Centrifugal Offensive—

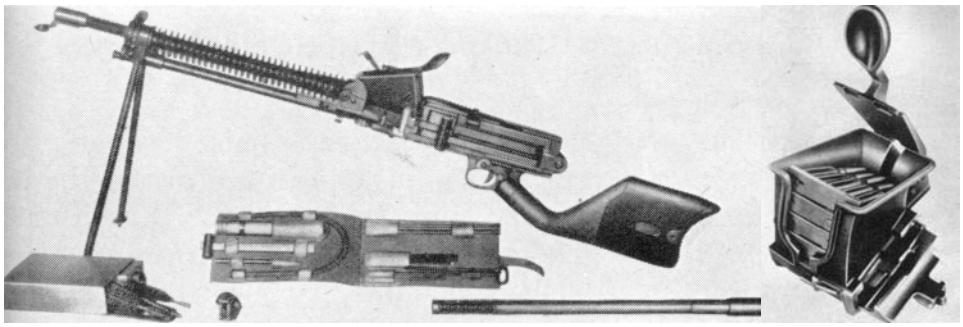


Figure 14. Type 11 6.5-mm LMG. Enlargement of feed hopper loaded with "stripper clips" is at right. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 91 and 95.

the Type 11 and the Model 96. The Type 11 LMG was an extremely poor weapon. While it conveniently fired six of the same 6.5-mm five-round stripper clips as the Type 38 rifle, it was prone to jams and misfires and had a bad reputation among Japanese soldiers. Although the Type 11 LMG's faults were well known, the weapon remained in service for years because financial considerations caused the Japanese government to delay its replacement. The Type 11 LMG's replacement, the Model 96 LMG, was a

much better machine gun. Based upon the Czech ZB 26 LMG's design, the weapon fired a 6.5-mm round with slightly less powder than the round for the Type 38 rifle, although Type 38 rifle rounds could be used as well, if necessary. The loader fed the weapon using a 30-round box magazine attached to the top of the gun. A uniquely Japanese innovation was the chrome alloy used to coat the interior parts to reduce wear



Figure 15. Model 96 6.5-mm LMG. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 69.

and tear. The Model 96 LMG was also two and a half pounds lighter than its predecessor, weighing 20 pounds. IJA infantry units used both the Type 11 and the Model 96 LMGs throughout the war.[7]

In addition to the LMG that each squad carried, the infantry battalion had a separate heavy machine gun (HMG) company of 8 to 12 Model 92 HMGs. The Model 92 HMG fired a heavier 7.7-mm bullet, but had a lower rate of fire than the Model 96 LMG--450 rounds per minute (rpm) as compared to 550 rpm. When mounted to its tripod, the Model 92 HMG weighed 122 pounds. Each HMG normally had a crew of eight men.[8]



Figure 16. Model 92 7.7-mm HMG. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 116.

Mortars

While the IJA organized its machine guns along Western lines, unlike Western armies it used surprisingly few mortars at the tactical level, instead organizing most into independent companies which were controlled by the army level artillery commander. The IJA's most widespread fire support weapon for the infantry was the lightweight, easy-to-fire Model 89 50-mm Grenade Dispenser (GD), dubbed the "knee mortar" by allied soldiers. Each platoon carried three, giving the infantry a surprisingly strong

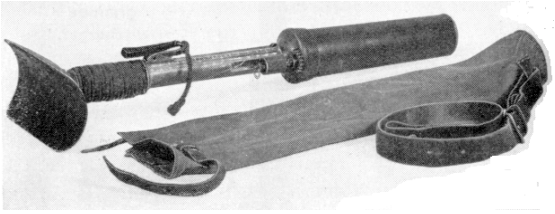


Figure 17. Model 89 50-mm Grenade Discharger. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 76.

organic fire support capability. The Model 89 Grenade Dispenser was a simple tube with a curved base and was extremely effective in jungle fighting. Its gunner fired it by placing the curved base firmly against the ground or a log, holding the tube at a 45-degree angle to the ground, pointing the front of the weapon at the enemy, and pulling back on the firing mechanism. The dispenser weighed ten pounds and had an effective range from 120 to 650 meters. It could fire high explosive (HE), smoke, incendiary, or signal rounds. Rounds had time fuzes to prevent premature detonation from impact with branches during flight. Because conventional mortars cannot fire when there is an obstruction overhead, they are difficult to use in the jungle. Instead of using the parabolic trajectory typical in mortars, the gunner adjusted the range on the Model 89 using a variable volume chamber. Thus, the gunner did not need to find an opening in the jungle canopy, and he did not have to adjust his firing angle to make range corrections. With minimal training, a gunner could fire rounds from it into windows or pillbox openings. According to one source, 40 percent of all U.S. casualties during the Pacific War came from Model 89 "knee mortars." [9]

Antitank Gun

Aside from the GD, IJA infantry units had a number of close support guns at the tactical level. The only antitank guns available to IJA infantrymen during this period were the six Model 94 37-mm Antitank Guns of the regimental antitank company. Because Japanese weapons designers in the early 1930s placed great importance on producing an effective antitank gun that could be easily transported by the foot-bound Japanese infantry, they decided on a 37-mm weapon, that could penetrate 30-mm of armor plating at 700 meters. Because the armor of the recently produced Soviet Type BT tank was only 20-mm at its strongest point, this seemed sufficient penetration power.

Tank technology moved faster than the designers of the gun had expected, however, and Japanese officers began clamoring for more powerful antitank weapons immediately after the Centrifugal Offensive. The semiautomatic Model 94 was an accurate weapon, easily broken into four man-portable loads for transportation, and because it was only

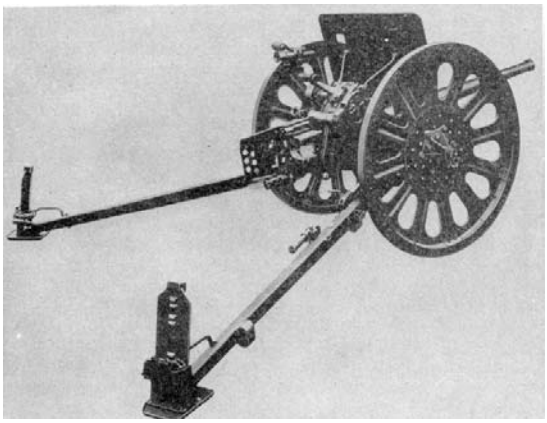


Figure 18. Model 94 37-mm Regimental Antitank Gun. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 108.

four and one half feet tall, it was easy to conceal. Because the Japanese faced little armor during the Centrifugal Offensive, soldiers used it primarily as an infantry close support weapon against crew-served weapons, pillboxes, and bunkers. Although its 37-mm round could penetrate none of the primary Allied tanks used later in the Pacific, it remained in service until the end of the war because it was available in quantity.[10]

Artillery

Because Japanese artillery's only role was support of the infantry, the critical principle in artillery design was light weight. Several flaws plagued Japanese artillery,

however. Even as late as 1944, Japanese arms producers were struggling to cope with Japan's pre-war failure to fully research methods of tooling factories for standardization and mass production. Therefore, artillery was not available to the IJA in great quantities, and what was available often did not have interchangeable parts, even within the same model of gun. Additionally, in their quest for lightweight guns, Japanese designers sacrificed both range and ruggedness, so Japanese artillery was often not as effective as that of Japan's Western opponents. Although the battle against the Soviets at Nomonhan in 1939 revealed many of the design flaws of the weapons, Japan produced no new artillery designs after that date.[11]

Table 2. IJA Infantry Support Weapons

Nomenclature	Caliber	Weight in Action	Maximum Rate of Fire	Effective Range	Weight and Type of Ammo
Model 89 Grenade Discharger (1929)	50-mm	10 lbs 4 oz	NA	650 meters	1 lb 12 oz HE, Incendiary, Smoke, Signal
Model 94 Regimental Antitank Gun (1934)	37-mm	714 lbs	20 rpm	2280 meters	2 lb 12 oz HE, HEAT, Shrapnel
Model 92 Battalion Gun (1932)	70-mm	468 lbs	10 rpm	1370 meters	8 lb 6 oz HE, Shrapnel, Smoke
Type 41 Regimental Gun (1908)	75-mm	1200 lbs	10 rpm	1920 meters	14 lbs 8 oz HE, HEAT
Model 94 Division Howitzer (1934)	75-mm	1181 lbs	15 rpm	8170 meters (Maximum)	14 lbs 8 oz HE, HEAT, Signal Shrapnel, Incendiary
Model 91 Division Howitzer (1931)	105-mm	3306 lbs	8 rpm	10,760 meters (Maximum)	39 lbs 8 oz HE, HEAT

Sources: U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 74-75, 195-200, 212-216, 224-226; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* Special Series No. 25 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 October 1944), 42-45, 49-50.

In keeping with the IJA's mobile offensive doctrine, commanders pushed artillery all the way down to the battalion level. The battalion gun platoon was equipped with two Model 92 70-mm Battalion Guns. The battalion gun had a range from 110 meters to 2,800 meters, but units employed it primarily in the direct fire role. Unlike comparable Allied guns, the Model 92 could be broken down and carried by its ten-man gun section.

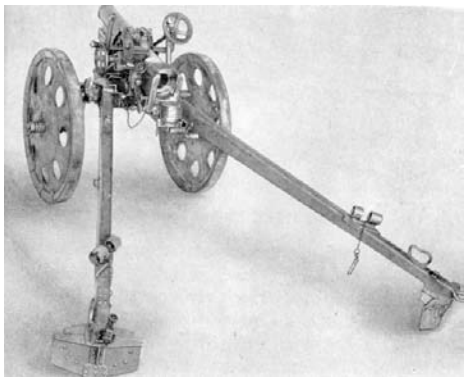


Figure 19. Model 92 70-mm Battalion Gun. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 211.

Because of its versatility and mobility, the battalion gun was present in most infantry engagements.[12]

The regimental gun company fielded four 75-mm Type 41 regimental guns. The Type 41 started out as a division fire support gun. The IJA replaced it at division level with the more modern 75-mm Model 94 gun in the late 1930s, but since thousands of the Type 41 guns were still stockpiled throughout Japan, rather than scrapping them, the IJA issued them to infantry regiments. The Type 41 had a maximum range of 6300 meters, and together with its basic issue items, six horses or thirteen men could pull it. Based on



Figure 20. Type 41 75-mm Regimental Gun. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* Special Series No. 19 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 211.

a Krupp design, the Type 41's crew could easily assemble and disassemble it. It fired both HE and high explosive anti tank (HEAT) rounds.[13]

The division artillery regiment was normally equipped with 36 Model 94 75-mm guns. The Model 94 was arguably the best Japanese field artillery piece of the war. When disassembled, eighteen men could carry it, emplace it in just ten minutes, and disassemble it again in five minutes. It had a maximum range of 8,170 meters and fired HE, HEAT, shrapnel, incendiary, and signal rounds. The Model 94 was a surprisingly modern artillery piece, but its counterrecoil was slow when the tube was elevated more than 30 degrees. To compensate for this weakness, rather than allowing units to fire the gun at ranges that required that the tube be elevated more than 30 degrees, IJA doctrine dictated that the gun displace forward. Some division artillery regiments replaced twelve to twenty-four of their Model 94s with 105-mm Model 91 howitzers. The Model 91, smaller and lighter than its U.S. and German equivalents, fired 39 pound 8 ounce HE and HEAT rounds, and had a maximum range of 10,760 meters, which was nearly the

same range as its European and U.S. counterparts. Six horses normally towed both division artillery pieces.[14]

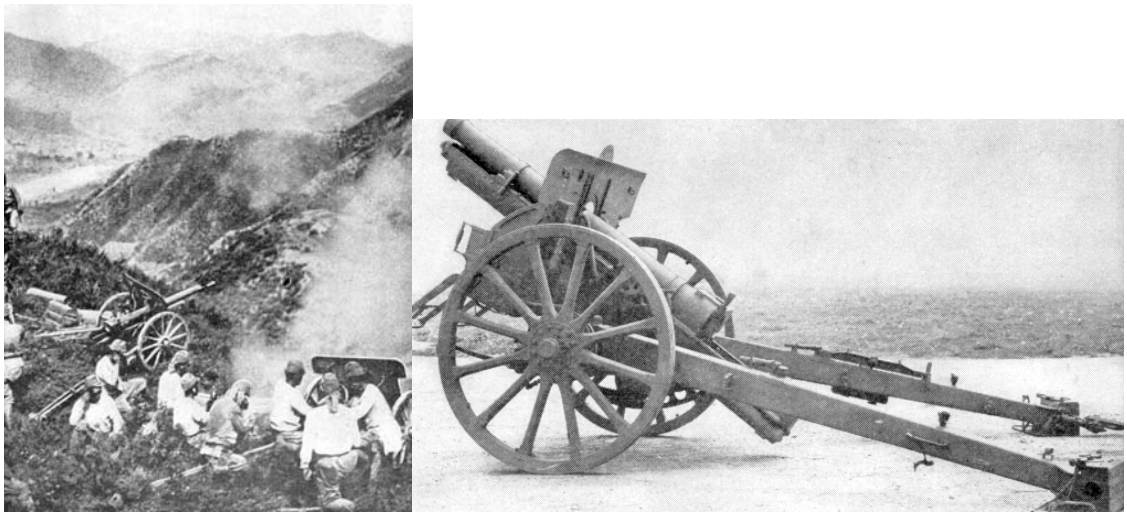


Figure 21. Division artillery. *Left,* Model 94 75-mm Howitzer; *right,* Model 91 105-mm Howitzer. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* Special Series No. 25 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 October 1944), 43 and 48.

Armor

As with artillery, the tank's main role was support of the infantry. The British brought Japan her first tank, a Whippet Mark 4, demonstrating it at the Aoyama parade ground in Tokyo on 30 October 1918. IJA led the Japanese to develop tanks that could quickly exploit undefended flanks or pursue a fleeing enemy, rather than tanks specially designed to survive while killing other tanks. These fast, lightly armored tanks generally had very good cross-country speeds, but little firepower. At the time of the Centrifugal Offensive the IJA had no tank divisions. Instead, commanders usually parceled tanks from attached tank regiments out in small units to the infantry. One Japanese innovation was the "tankette,"[15] which was essentially a gun carrier lighter than three tons. The

division reconnaissance regiment included a company of seven tankettes, while tank regiments had 27 light and 64 medium tanks.[16]

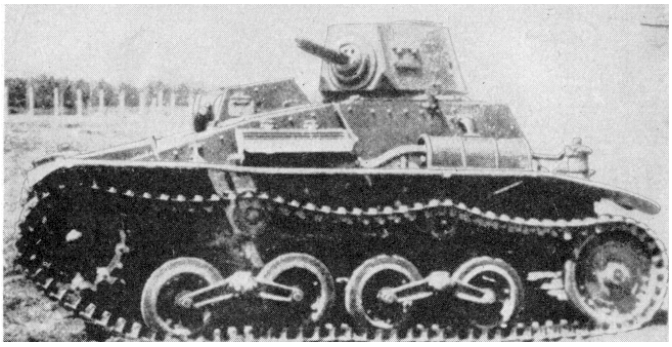


Figure 22. Model 94 Tankette. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 6.

The most widely used Japanese tankette was the Model 94. Though designed in 1934 for combat against the Soviets, at least one British observer in Malaya believed that the Japanese had designed Model 94 specifically for use in the tropics. Able to handily traverse rice fields, streams, and light jungle, it was well suited for its role in the Centrifugal Offensive. The Model 94 Tankette carried a crew of two, weighed just over three tons, had a 32 horsepower gasoline engine, moved at a top speed of 26 miles per hour (mph), and was armed with a 6.5-mm machine gun. It had no traversing gear, so the commander/ gunner had to push his shoulder against the machine gun to move the turret. Its armor was no more than 12-mm thick, so Allied small arms and antitank guns easily penetrated it.[17]

The Japanese used two main light tanks—the Model 93 and the Model 95. The Model 93 mounted two 6.5-mm machine guns—one in the hull and one in the turret. Its crew consisted of a driver, an engineer who doubled as the hull machine gunner, and a

commander/gunner. It had an 85 horsepower gasoline engine that enabled it to move as fast as 28 mph, and weighed 7.8 tons. Its thickest armor was 22-mm—still a good target for antitank and small arms fire. The Model 95 Light Tank had better firepower than the Model 93. It carried a 37-mm Model 94 tank gun[18] as its main armament, capable of penetrating 30-mm of armor plate at 300 meters. It also carried two 7.7-mm machine guns. In addition to its armament improvements, the engine of the Model 95

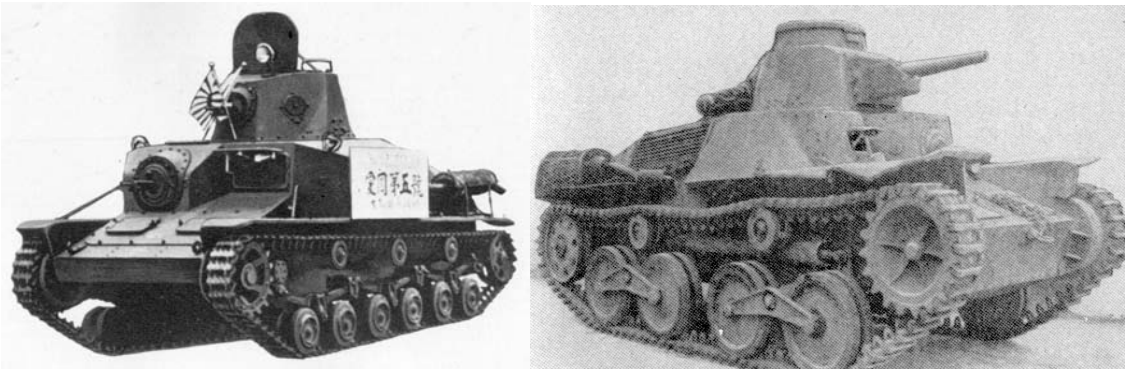


Figure 23. Light tanks. *Left,* Model 93 Light Tank; *right,* Model 95 Light Tank. *Sources:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 120; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 6.

Light Tank was configured so that the engineer could repair it without getting out of the tank. The 110 horsepower engine ran on diesel fuel, reducing the risk of ignition due to enemy fire. Although slightly heavier than the Model 93, at 8.4 tons, the Model 95's top speed was slightly faster--30 mph. To preserve this speed while compensating for the additional weight of the 37-mm main gun and its ammunition, the Model 95 Light Tank's armor was reduced to the same thickness as the Tankette's—12-mm. Another

weakness was that the Model 95 has at least 23 feet of dead space in each direction, making it even more infantry-dependent than most tanks.[19]

The Japanese medium tanks carried significantly heavier main guns than either the tankettes or the light tanks. The older Model 89 Medium Tank mounted a 57-mm Model 90 tank gun, which, despite its increased caliber, could penetrate only 20-mm of



Figure 24. Medium tanks. *Left,* Model 89 Medium Tank; *right,* Model 97 Medium Tank. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 November 1944), 35 and 45.

armor due to a low muzzle velocity. It had a 136 horsepower gasoline engine, a maximum speed of 15 mph, 17-mm of armor protection, and weighed 13 tons. The Japanese later replaced its gasoline engine with a diesel one. In addition to the driver, engineer, and commander, the tank carried a gunner. The more common Model 97 Medium Tank initially mounted the same 57-mm Model 90 main gun as the Model 89 Medium Tank. The IJA's designers later upgraded this to a 47-mm Model 1 tank gun, which, despite its smaller round, could penetrate more than 80-mm of armor plate. The Model 97 Medium Tank weighed 14.8 tons, had armor as thick as 33-mm, and mounted

an air-cooled 150 horsepower diesel engine. It carried the same crew as the Model 89 Medium Tank, but was much faster, with a top speed of 25 mph.[20]

Table 3. IJA Armored Fighting Vehicles

Nomenclature	Crew	Weight	Maximum Speed	Main Gun	Armor Penetration	Operating Range
Model 94 Tankette (1934)	2	3.4 tons	26 mph	6.5-mm LMG	None	100 miles
Model 93 Light Tank (1933)	3	7.8 tons	28 mph	6.5-mm LMG (x 2)	None	120 miles
Model 95 Light Tank (1935)	3	8.4 tons	30 mph	Model 94 37-mm	30-mm (300 meters)	110 miles
Model 89 Medium Tank (1929)	4	13 tons	15 mph	Model 90 57-mm	20-mm (300 meters)	100 miles
Model 97 Medium Tank (1937)	4	14.8 tons	25 mph	Model 1 47-mm	80-mm (540 meters)	150 miles

Source: U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 7-8, 17-18, 25-27, 35-36, 45-47, and 80-83.

The biggest fault common to all Japanese tanks was their weak firepower. Because they were not designed for tank-to-tank combat, most of their pitifully weak main guns could not penetrate their Allied opponents' tanks—the lightest Allied tank in the Pacific, the M3 Stuart, had 43-mm of armor protection. Only the Model 97 Medium Tank could kill Allied tanks, but infantry small arms or antitank weapons could destroy all of the Japanese tanks. In armored combat, as at Nomonhan, the Japanese choice to sacrifice protection for speed would have been disastrous. During the Centrifugal Offensive, however, Japan faced few Allied tanks—none in Malaya, a squadron in the Netherlands East Indies, a battalion in the Philippines, and a brigade in Burma. Further, because all Japanese armor had unusually light track pressure, Japanese tanks could cross soft ground and hastily repaired bridges, appearing in places where their

conventional minded opponents did not expect them. In essence, Japanese armor won their part of the Centrifugal Offensive by default.[21]

Communications

Communications among the tank, artillery, infantry, and other units within an IJA division were extremely simple. Echelons from division through company had both radio and wire communications equipment. Wire was the preferred method of communications because of the unreliability of wireless radios. Although Japanese communications equipment was well designed and simple to service and maintain, it often failed in the jungle due to poor protection against moisture and fungus. Most unit-level wireless radios normally had a range of one to two miles, but this range was significantly less in the jungle. Because of this, commanders often had to rely on messengers. This limited ability to communicate with subordinate leaders forced IJA commanders to issue simple, short, mission orders, because they were unable to centralize their fast-moving offensive and maintain the necessary speed of execution using existing equipment.[22]

Transportation

The Japanese automotive industry had been one of Japan's pre-war economic weaknesses, and it improved little during the war. On the commencement of hostilities with the U.S., the Japanese seized the Ford and General Motors plants in Japan to produce trucks for the war effort, but motorized transportation never became a strong point for the IJA. Instead, throughout World War II, most divisions used horse drawn transport. Only the 5th, 18th, and Guards divisions—the divisions that invaded Malaya—were fully motorized. As part of the preparation for the Malaya invasion, the

25th Army fitted out its three divisions with 500 trucks and 600 bicycles each. The trucks would carry or pull heavy equipment and artillery pieces, and every soldier not assigned as a truck or armored vehicle crewman would ride a bicycle. Soldiers purchased bicycle repair parts as needed from local Malayan civilians, many of whom had bought inexpensive Japanese-made bicycles before the war. IJA units also made extensive use of the "Churchill resupply"—serviceable trucks, cars, equipment, and gasoline captured from the British Army. Even the three "motorized" IJA divisions had only a third of the number of trucks one would find in an equivalent Allied or German division. Outside of these three divisions, the 100 trucks and 1,000 two-wheeled horse-drawn carts of the division's transportation regiment made up the bulk of the units' transportation assets. Given this, it is understandable that Japanese weapons designers placed such importance on the lightweight construction of their weapons and equipment.[23]

Bridging

The momentum of both motorized and foot bound IJA formations was greatly aided by the bridging assets carried by IJA engineers. Each IJA division had a three-company engineer regiment, with one of these companies usually assigned to each infantry regiment. To facilitate mobility, these engineers could emplace assault bridges made of sections of steel tubing, joined together and supported by floats, and held on the engineers' shoulders. These man-portable bridges could span rivers of up to 100 feet and were wide enough to pass foot traffic in one direction. IJA engineers also could build sturdier pontoon bridges or improvised wooden trestle bridges, often lashing together the latter with straw rope. These heavier bridges were strong enough for artillery and heavy equipment to cross. Additionally, IJA engineers frequently repaired bridges that retreating Allied forces or artillery fires had damaged.[24]



Figure 25. Assault bridge. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No.10 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 21 March 1942), 21.

Swords and Bayonets

Unlike most of the IJA division's equipment, a sword would seem an anachronistic affectation on the modern battlefield. The Japanese officer, however, viewed it as indispensable. In early Japanese history, only samurai—the warrior caste—were allowed to carry swords more than 24 inches long. One of the three ancient treasures that symbolized the imperial line, the sword was "the soul of the samurai." When the Meiji emperor decided at the close of the nineteenth century to end the influence of the samurai class as a prelude to modernizing Japan, one of his first acts was to make a declaration outlawing the wear of swords in public by civilians. As a part of the same modernization program, the Japanese issued their troops European-style uniforms, and officers carried Western dress sabers. These ornamental sabers were totally unsuited for practical use by officers schooled in the traditional use of the two-handed Japanese sword. As the nationalism of the 1930s took root, IJA officers started

to see themselves as the spiritual heirs of the samurai. To encourage this perception, the IJA replaced its Western sabers with the Model 94 army officer's sword, which closely resembled the traditional samurai sword. Although many officers' swords had machine-made blades, a considerable number of officers carried traditionally made, hand-folded blades. Some of these blades were heirlooms that had been in an officer's family for centuries, while other officers chose to buy newly made traditional swords, often costing as much as a lieutenant colonel's monthly salary. Allied soldiers reported that the Japanese sword could slice a man from collarbone to waist in a single stroke. Officers always carried them into battle—even on parachute jumps, in midget submarines, and in the cockpits of their planes. In an army devoted to aggressively closing with and killing the enemy, preferably in hand-to-hand combat, officers would naturally carry such weapons.[25]

Just as IJA officers believed themselves the spiritual heirs to the samurai, IJA soldiers saw themselves as modern *ashigaru*[26]—lightly armed peasant warriors. Thus, while swords were indispensable to IJA officers, Japanese doctrine stressed that the bayonet was the soldier's most essential weapon. Fifteen and one-half inches long and weighing fourteen ounces, the Japanese bayonet was a sturdy, efficient tool. Soldiers almost always fixed rather than carried it, and its weight helped to balance the cumbersome Type 38 rifle. Not surprisingly, IJA machine gunners even attached bayonets to their squad LMGs.[27]

Trends

As in most armies, the Japanese national industrial base's capabilities and existing military doctrine drove military weapons and equipment design. Due to Japanese industry's initial lack of technical sophistication, weapons were often crudely

made and technologically inferior—Japan simply could not keep up with Western advances in military hardware. Likewise, designers frequently failed to test equipment sufficiently, and optimistic calculations about a piece of equipment's effectiveness based on its use against the troops of Chinese provincial warlords proved wildly inaccurate when the same piece of equipment was used against the soldiers of a better-trained, more modern army. Japanese scientists were unusually innovative, however, and constantly adopted ideas and designs from Western weapons in an attempt to compensate for their lack of technology. Reflecting the IJA's doctrine of infantry-centered offensive tactics, the Japanese arms industry also put extraordinary effort into the design of light, and thus mobile, weapons and equipment. Therefore, virtually all of a division's infantry support weapons were man or horse portable. Additionally, because the Japanese produced weapons with extreme economy, they were usually available in quantity. Finally, the IJA benefited from a certain degree of "dumb luck" in its assigned battlefield for the Centrifugal Offensive. The Type 38 rifle, The Model 94 Antitank Gun, most Japanese artillery, and all of the various Japanese tank designs were totally inadequate for the task they had been designed for—combat against the Soviets in northern China. In the jungles of the Pacific and Southeast Asia, however, where most battles were fought at ranges of 50 meters or less, and where the Allies employed very little armor, these same weapons seemed almost "tailor made" for their mission. While it is interesting to consider what sorts of weapons the Japanese would have built given sufficient time, technology, and raw materials, it is indisputable that the equipment the IJA carried into the Centrifugal Offensive was well matched to their aggressive, highly mobile style of combat.

[1] Before 1926, the Japanese assigned equipment model numbers using a dating system based on the reigning emperor's "ascension year," the year he officially took the throne. Emperor Meiji officially began his reign in 1868, Emperor Taisho in 1912, and Emperor Showa in 1926. The infantry rifle called the "Type 38" was first manufactured in Meiji 38, or 1905. This dating system is still widely used in Japan--this paper was written in Heisei 12, the year 2000. Equipment named under this system is referred to in this paper as "Type 38," etc. Starting in 1926, model numbers used the Japanese calendar year, which began in 660 BC (their year 00), the year Japan was believed to have been founded. The Western year equivalent is found by subtracting 660, which would indicate that the Model 2595 Light Tank was first manufactured in 1935. Equipment named under this system is referred to in this thesis as "Model 95," etc. Starting in 1940, only the last digit of the Japanese calendar year was used, thus, "Model 2" would designate a piece of equipment adopted in 1942. This confusing system is rendered more complicated by the fact that multiple items of equipment were adopted some years, giving, for example, both a Model 97 Light Tank and a Model 97 Medium Tank.

[2] Chiaravalle, 5; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 6 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 9 January 1942), 3; and F. Spencer Chapman, The *Jungle is Neutral* (London: Butler and Tanner, Ltd., 1949), 27.

[3] A.J. Barker, *Japanese Army Handbook, 1939-1945* (New York: Hippocrene, 1979), 12; Tadao Nakata, *Dai Nippon Teikoku Riku Kai Gun Gunsou to Soubi* (Imperial Japanese Army and Navy Uniforms and Equipment) (Hong Kong: Colorcraft, Ltd., 1997), 68-9 and 168-189; Ritta Nakanishi, *Nihon no Hohei Kaki* (Japanese Infantry Weapons) (Tokyo: Dainippon Kaiga, 1998), 54; Chapman, 28; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, 348 and 350; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Information Bulletin No. 6*, 3; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 7 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 24 January 1942), 4; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 10 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 21 March 1942), 10 and 16; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare: A Summary,* Information Bulletin No. 16 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 20 May 1942), 58 and 83.

[4] Kennedy, 55.

[5] Personal experience firing Type 38 rifle, 22 April 2000; Ushisaburo Kobayashi, *Military Industries of Japan,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922), 86; Barker, 30 and 34; Bergerud, 285; Infantry Journal, 40; and Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha (The Pacific War Research Company) *Nippon Gun Jissen Heiki* (Wartime Japanese Military Weapons) (Tokyo: Ginga, 1996), 168.

[6] Personal experience firing Type 38 rifle, 22 April 2000; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons, Special Series No. 19,* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 25-26; Barker, 34;

Bergerud, 285; Infantry Journal, 40; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 168; and U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 189.

[7] Barker, 44; Bergerud, 304; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* 96-97; Infantry Journal, 40; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 172 and 178; Tanaka, 70; and U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 29.

[8] Barker, 47; and Tanaka, 78 - 80.

[9] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Mortars and Grenade Dischargers,* Special Series No. 30 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 22-24; Barker, 53 and 55; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* 74-77; Bergerud, 319; Infantry Journal, 88; Nakata, 29; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 200; Thompson, 27 and 38; Morimatsu, 80; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 8 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 7 February 1942), 10.

[10] Barker, 61; Drea, 6; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* 194-197; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 128; Tanaka, 90; Morimatsu, 83-84; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 218; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 107 - 108; and U.S. Army, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East, and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), *Report on Installations and Captured Weapons, Java and Singapore*, Japanese Monograph No. 68 (15 May 1958), 106.

[11] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery* Special Series No. 25 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 15 October 1944), 29 and 32; Drea, 9; and Bergerud, 330.

[12] Barker, 60; Nakanishi, 44; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* 210-213; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 219; and Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 94.

[13] Barker, 60; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Infantry Weapons,* 222-224; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 220; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 106; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 10*,* 10.

[14] Barker, 87; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 220-225; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery*, 42-49.

[15] ● , *keisokosha*, lit. “lightly armored vehicle.”

[16] Barker, 81; Kennedy, 24; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 18 and 26; and U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 29.

[17] Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 59; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 6*,* 6; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34*,* 6-12.

[18] Not to be confused with the Model 94 37-mm antitank gun, which was a completely different design that fired a totally different round.

[19] Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 46-48; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34*,* 15-30; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare* Information Bulletin No. 12*,* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 22 April 1942), 32.

[20] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34*,* 34-38, 43-47, 82; and Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 34-36.

[21] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Armored Information Memorandum Number 3* (Washington: 31 July 1945), 1; Tsuji, 214; Taiheiyo Senso Kenkyu Sha, 35-36; Bergerud, 335; Barker, 64; David Smurthwaite, ed., *The Forgotten War: The British Army in the Far East 1941-1945* (London: Jolly & Barber Limited, 1992), 109-110; and Anderson, 32.

[22] U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 303 and 314; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare: A Summary, Information* Bulletin No. 16*,* 52; and Infantry Journal, 86.

[23] Thompson, 28-9; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 41, 334-5; Drea, 10; Tsuji, 183-5; and Chapman, 98.

[24] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 9 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 22 February 1942), 16 and 18; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 40, 324-6; and Tsuji, 184.

[25] Richard Fuller and Ron Gregory, Japanese *Military Civil Swords and Dirks* (Charlottesville: Howell, 1996), 74; Infantry Journal, 38; Cook, 414; Nakata, 300; and McLean, 60.

[26] , *ashigaru,* lit. “light legs,” in contrast to the heavily-armored samurai.

[27] Thompson, 36; Barker, 49; and U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 195.

CHAPTER 5

TACTICS

The Imperial Japanese Army's tactical methods were critical to Japan's success in the Centrifugal Offensive. While the average Japanese soldier and officer had trained extensively in attacking aggressively and enduring hardship for long periods, and while they could easily adapt much of their equipment to the rugged jungle terrain of the Southwest Pacific, their performance in battle at the tactical level is what won the campaign. IJA doctrine stressed rapid assaults and pursuits to gain and maintain the initiative on the battlefield, never allowing the enemy time to regroup and organize an effective defense. The doctrine and techniques the Japanese used capitalized on the IJA's training and equipment, and were extremely well suited to the enemy and terrain IJA units faced.

Imperial Japanese Army Offensive Doctrine

Since the founding of the Imperial Japanese Army at the end of the nineteenth century, Japanese doctrine centered almost exclusively around the concept of the superiority of the offense. German Major Jakob Meckel, a brilliant instructor who helped to establish the curriculum at the Japanese Army Staff College in the late 1880s, was an essential figure in the development of this doctrine. Meckel's experiences in the Franco-Prussian War deeply affected him. Meckel witnessed countless instances where, despite huge desertion problems in the infantry, the German Army defeated the French in powerful, decisive offensive actions. He had thus become a strong proponent of offensive maneuver and especially of mass action, which made it difficult for potential deserters to flee. Although his tactical thinking was outdated even in his own time, Meckel's engaging, assertive teaching style impressed his Japanese students, who

enthusiastically accepted his ideas. Two decades after Meckel's return to Germany, his former students put his theories to the test in the Russo-Japanese War, where the IJA lost 50,000 men taking Port Arthur. Because this was the first battle where Asian soldiers had defeated a Western army, the IJA leadership hailed Port Arthur as a great victory, ignoring the horrendous loss of life. During World War I the IJA saw little action, and its successful Russo-Japanese War doctrine remained unchanged. Ultimately, the Japanese fought the Centrifugal Offensive using a doctrine that had been outdated for at least six decades.[1]

The central concept of Japanese doctrine was that units must close rapidly with and defeat the enemy using bayonets and hand-to-hand combat. It was an article of faith within the IJA that the Japanese soldier's superior fighting spirit guaranteed victory in close combat, because the soldiers of other nations were "corrupted" by their over reliance on material luxuries like machine guns, artillery, and motor transport. While preparation and reconnaissance were useful for the attackers, it was imperative that units seize and keep the initiative, even if they had to attack with less than perfect information or synchronization. Doctrine further stated that the best method of attack was encirclement, or at least envelopment, even when the attacking force was numerically inferior to its opponent. Tactical training focused around the meeting engagement, with subordinate commanders taking decisive, independent action to keep the initiative. Frontal assaults against "soft spots" were discouraged, but were permissible if they were necessary to deny the enemy the time to prepare strong defenses. Field Service Regulations stressed that the purpose of all arms of service was to "enable the infantry to close with and annihilate the enemy." Defense was a temporary measure that units only took while preparing to attack again. Based on this

doctrine, IJA leaders often chose to attack in situations where a Western officer would feel compelled to go on to the defensive.[2]

The kind of warfare the Japanese planned to fight required significant initiative from junior leaders, and the IJA trained all echelons to centralize their planning while decentralizing execution. Commanders expected all soldiers to understand their higher headquarters' objectives, and to act decisively if tactical opportunities presented themselves, even in the absence of orders. Because of this, orders were usually brief and to the point—division attack plans were often less than two pages long. While the emphasis on constant offense helped the IJA to build a high degree of initiative among its soldiers, the soldiers' "offensive spirit" often led IJA leaders to attack of their own volition, ignoring their higher headquarters' efforts at synchronization. IJA units thus ended up having little understanding of time/space factors, and were frequently unable to concentrate their forces.[3]

Subversion and Reconnaissance

Even before the Centrifugal Offensive began, Japanese intelligence officers, infiltrated with the help of Japanese businesses located throughout Southeast Asia, were gathering information on likely military objectives. These officers worked to build local sentiment against the colonial powers, forming organizations like the Indian National Army and the Free Burmese Army to help undermine the fighting spirit of British colonial units. They also recruited local civilians to provide information and assistance to advancing Japanese troops. These "Fifth Columnists" provided Japanese forces with valuable information on Allied troop dispositions, and often acted as guides, helping Japanese units to negotiate "impassable" terrain and attack unprotected Allied flanks.[4]

When local guides were not available, Japanese reconnaissance troops would often don local civilian garb, taking advantage of the white Allied soldiers' inability to distinguish one Asian from another. Attacks by Japanese soldiers disguised as Chinese troops often caused British troops fighting in Burma to doubt the identity or loyalty of legitimate Chinese units. When local clothing was unavailable, the Japanese would use captured British uniforms and helmets to good effect. Through such methods and ruses, the "Fifth Column," its Japanese leaders, and ordinary Japanese soldiers gained significant tactical intelligence and helped to undermine American, Australian, British, and Dutch confidence in their indigenous allies.[5]

Movement to Contact

The IJA's preferred form of the offense during the Centrifugal Offensive was the movement to contact. When conducting movements to contact, the Japanese usually attempted to fight meeting engagements, in which two advancing opposing forces collide. The meeting engagement gave Japanese forces the ideal environment in which to exploit their offensive training in speed and individual initiative. In such an engagement, IJA officers believed, the superior fighting spirit of even small IJA units would be certain to defeat forward positioned Allied units. Japanese meeting engagements during the Centrifugal Offensive inevitably turned into either hasty or deliberate attacks, since Allied units opted to fight from defensive positions instead of rushing forward without reconnaissance against attacking IJA units.

Speed, mobility, and rapid concentration of fires were the main techniques of the advance guard battalions and regiments. The advance guard usually traveled five to six hours ahead of the division or regiment's main body. Its mission was to gain information, brush aside minor opposition, and provide time for the follow-on main body

to deploy when necessary. The IJA organized their advance guard units out of tank, infantry, engineer, and artillery elements. Four or five tanks would lead, followed by infantry and engineers.[6] For indirect fire support, artillery or mortars would bound from alternating positions no more than five kilometers behind the lead tanks. To increase speed and mobility, the infantry, engineers, and artillery often rode in trucks. If Japanese-made or captured trucks were unavailable, the foot-bound elements would follow the tanks on bicycles, breaking down their artillery pieces into individual loads, and towing their mortars using three bicycles in a tandem arrangement.[7]

Movement was rapid, and it usually concentrated on roads and side trails. If the tanks encountered obstacles, they would try to drive through them. If this proved



Figure 26. Model 95 light tank after breaching abatis roadblock. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 24.

impossible, they would pull back and, assisted by the infantry, provide covering fire for the engineers, who would reduce the obstacles. If the Allies had cratered a road or

destroyed a bridge, the engineers would make the road passable. If Allied artillery engaged the unit, the trailing artillery would shoot counterbattery fires.[8]

When the advance guard encountered enemy resistance, the tanks would attempt to drive through the defenders. Frequently, dug-in Allied commanders would retreat when attacked by even a small element of tanks—the psychological effect of

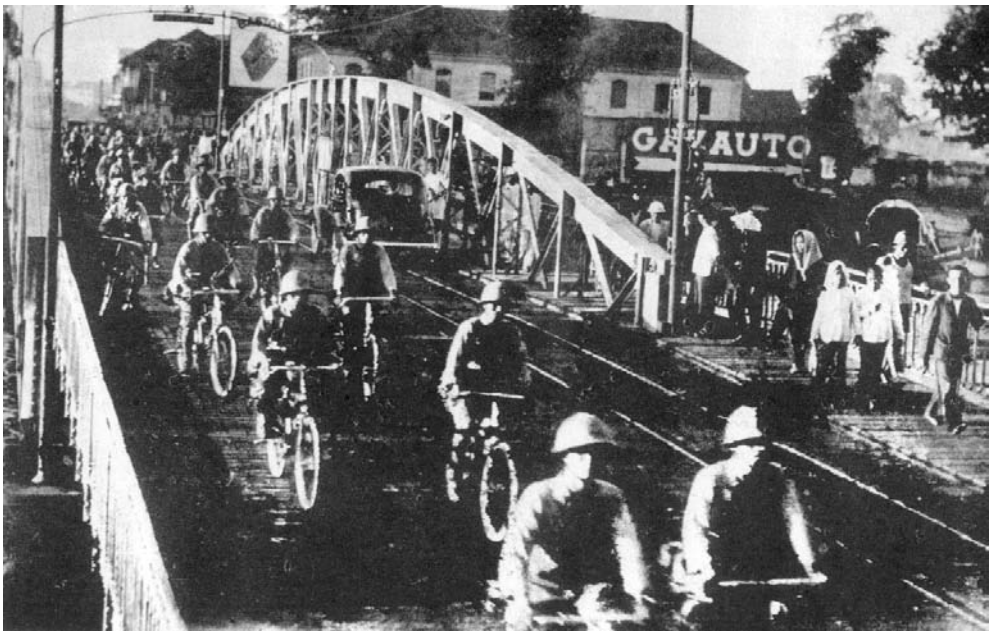


Figure 27. Bicycle-mounted infantry. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 10 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 21 March 1942), 22.

tanks landing on Corregidor was what caused General Wainwright to finally surrender his force. If unable to force their way through, the tanks would attempt wide flanking maneuvers on both sides of the defending units, attempting to get around the defenders. If unable to flank, the tanks would provide a base of fire for the follow-on infantry, who

would quickly dismount, fan out, and begin probing the Allied defensive line with fires and noise to pinpoint Allied positions.[9]

Once they found a weak spot in the Allied line, the infantry would quickly infiltrate forces to disrupt the Allied rear area. IJA infantrymen who had penetrated to the rear of the defenders would light firecrackers and lay down a high volume of fire from their weapons, causing Allied troops to believe themselves surrounded. Frequently IJA tank



Figure 28. Model 92 battalion gun and machine guns providing supporting fires. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 6 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 9 January 1942), Figure 7.

and infantry units behind Allied defensive lines would set up a roadblock or a series of roadblocks on the main line of communication, often in defiles, bends in the road, and near bridges. Retreating Allied units would then have to fight their way to the rear. These roadblocks were usually made of trees or destroyed vehicles, and could be manned by elements numbering from a few men all the way up a regiment, and often

included supporting fires from battalion guns sited well forward. If a retreating unit was able to break through the Japanese roadblock, follow-on infantry forces pursued, denying the unit the opportunity to regroup.[10]

IJA advance guard march discipline was often poor. Infantrymen in trucks and on bicycles often traveled in large, bunched-up groups, ignoring interval, noise, and light discipline. Despite this, IJA advance guard units were extremely successful, gaining key terrain objectives and frequently routing much larger units that were defending from prepared positions. By forcing their way around and through defending forces, the



Figure 29. Pontoon bridge. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 9 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 22 February 1942), 18.

Japanese often tricked their opponents into believing themselves surrounded. The Japanese would then cause their opponents high casualties when the roadbound Allies abandoned their positions and retreated into Japanese roadblocks on their rearward lines of communication. Because of the high success of advance guard units, the

Japanese preferred to use them instead of making deliberate attacks, placing more importance on rapid advance than careful reconnaissance.[11]

Deliberate Attacks

While the IJA preferred to avoid deliberate attacks, strong Allied resistance sometimes made them necessary. If the advance guard was unable to penetrate the Allied defensive positions in any strength, forward infantry units would attempt to fix the enemy with grenade launchers and machine guns. As in a movement to contact, they



Figure 30. Model 89 grenade discharger used for suppressive fires (note officer with sword at left). *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Mortars and Grenade Dischargers,* Special Series No. 30 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 31 September 1943), 8.

would penetrate Allied lines where possible, and would identify positions by drawing fire and using small reconnaissance patrols. Sometimes the infiltrating soldiers would climb trees and snipe at Allied troops, while other times they would go to ground, staying silent and hidden until the main attack began. At night, small Japanese units would bayonet

the occupants of machine gun positions that had given their locations away during the day.[12]

The main body would avoid frontal assaults when possible, preferring to attack flanks. In several cases, Japanese units used commandeered local watercraft to flank and ultimately turn their opponents. They would also use night movements, supposedly "impenetrable" terrain, back roads, fog, and storms to attack the enemy from unexpected directions. During the Bandjermasin invasion in the Netherlands East Indies, the IJA's 3d Battalion of the 146th Infantry Regiment, along with a supporting artillery battery and a company of engineers, hacked 30 miles through the jungle, only to find itself faced with a withdrawing Dutch unit. It attacked the column, but the commander was unable to completely destroy the defeated unit. His troops, 80% of whom were suffering from malaria, were too exhausted to pursue the fleeing enemy. The battalion lost only nine men to combat or illness. Their experience is typical of the lengths to which the IJA was willing to go to gain surprise.[13]

The Japanese used their initial air attacks during the Centrifugal Offensive to gain air superiority. This achieved, they would use dive-bombers to help them in the initial penetration of fortified positions. If the attacking unit faced pillboxes, it would soften up the target with artillery and air support. As the indirect fire lifted, infantry teams would use their grenade launchers to suppress the pillbox while they advanced to within grenade range. From about 30 meters away, the attacking forces would assault the position, firing machine guns and throwing grenades. If the assault failed to take the pillbox, infantrymen would drop grenades down the position's air vents. If the occupants attempted to retreat, soldiers who had infiltrated to the rear of the position would pick them off as they fled.[14]

As soon as the attackers had penetrated the defensive line, they would begin moving forward in small columns. These columns would spread out and mop up any Allied soldiers remaining in their positions. The division or regimental commander then organized a fresh advance guard to act as a pursuit force, often equipping it with captured vehicles and artillery pieces. If ammunition was not available for the captured artillery, the pursuit force would tow the pieces forward anyway, expecting to resupply with captured ammunition from depots further in the enemy rear. The advance guard set off in pursuit of the fleeing defenders, and the process began again. This offensive technique maximized the attacking unit's speed while keeping the defeated enemy off balance. It was extremely successful during the first phases of the Pacific War.[15]

Night Attacks

As technology improved during the period between the two world wars, Japanese doctrine writers realized that they needed to develop methods to help the Japanese infantry close with their opponents without being decimated by the effects of the enemy's massed defensive weapons. One ancient technique they re-invented to negate many of the firepower advantages of Western armies was the night attack. At night, enemy tanks had difficulty maneuvering, enemy aircraft couldn't support ground units, and enemy artillery observers and machine gunners were unable to adjust fires effectively. Under cover of darkness, IJA infantrymen could creep up on enemy positions and quickly dispatch the occupants using superior Japanese close combat skills. With these considerations in mind, Japanese planners developed the surprise night attack and the night attack in force.

The difference between the two types of night attacks was that units conducted the surprise night attack without artillery preparation to avoid giving away the attack until

the last possible moment. Infantry companies and battalions conducted most night attacks—command and control difficulties normally prevented regiments from employing the technique. In both cases, the unit attacked in two separate echelons to seize limited objectives. Thorough reconnaissance, which sometimes took days, usually preceded the attacks. For control, attacking forces were more concentrated than during the day, and company commanders led their units from the front. Normally, the first echelon would move close to the defensive line, and would advance either by crawling or short rushes, in many cases waiting for the sound of their approach to be masked by preplanned direct fires. Soldiers only loaded rounds into their weapons when ordered by their company commanders—usually they would attack hand-to-hand instead. On occasion, tanks would clear a lane for the infantry through the forward defensive wire. When employed, tanks would also use their main guns to destroy heavy weapons positions or to harass the defending unit's flanks. After the first echelon penetrated the forward defenses, the second echelon would push through the gap and seize the unit's deep objective in roughly the same manner as in a daytime attack. The Japanese preferred to make night attacks either just before dawn or just after nightfall.[16]

Night operations became a forte of the Japanese infantry. After the fighting in the Netherlands East Indies had ended, a Japanese officer commented to a Dutch prisoner of war, "You Europeans march all day, prepare all night, and at dawn launch an attack with tired troops. We Japanese allow our troops to rest all day while we reconnoiter your positions exactly. Then that night we attack with fresh troops." By capitalizing on their peacetime training in night attacks, the Japanese frequently negated many of their opponents' daytime advantages in combined arms coordination and firepower.[17]

Trends

Japanese tactical methods during the Centrifugal Offensive were well suited to the peculiarities of the Imperial Japanese Army. By capitalizing on speed and surprise, small, lightly armed Japanese units routinely routed much stronger defending Allied units. The speed with which the Japanese then pursued the retreating forces both allowed IJA units to maintain their offensive momentum and denied the Allies the opportunity to regroup. Japanese tactics took full advantage of Japanese individual and small unit training, and helped to compensate for the relative inferiority of many individual items of Japanese equipment. During the first part of the Pacific War, they were the factual basis of the IJA's reputation for superiority in jungle warfare. This reputation did not start to fade until after the bloody combat on Guadalcanal ended in February 1943.

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[1] Ernst L. Presseisen, *Before Aggression: Europeans Prepare the Japanese Army* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), 135-137.

[2] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* Special Series No. 25*,* 7, 9; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces,* 85-86; U.S. Marine Corps, *Jungle Warfare Manual* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 11; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, November, 1944)*,* 144 and 147; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence School, Military Intelligence Service*, Japanese Tactics and Techniques* (1945), 7; and Alan C. Headrick, "Bicycle Blitzkrieg: The Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore" (Newport: Naval War College: 8 February 1994), 14.

[3] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, Pacific Unit, *Applied Tactics, Japanese Army; Translation of Japanese Manual* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 14-16; Military Intelligence School, Military Intelligence Service*, Japanese Tactics and Techniques* (1945), 7; Faris R. Kirkland, "Combat Leadership Styles: Empowerment Versus Authoritarianism," (*Parameters*: 1990 20[4]), 65; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Tank and Antitank Warfare,* Special Series No. 34*,* 91.

[4] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare, Information Bulletin No. 12,* 24 and 33; Iwaichi Fujiwara, *F. Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia during World War II* (Hong Kong: Heinemann

Asia, 1983), 20 and 34; Eric Robertson, *The Japanese File: Pre-War Japanese Penetration in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1979), 9-10; and United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle, Second Edition* (Delhi: Government of India Press, August 1944), 2.

[5] Francis G. Brink, *Japanese Tactical Methods: Characteristics of Japanese Operations* (Fort Benning, GA: U.S. Army Infantry School, 1942), 9; Canada, Army, *Canadian Army Training Memorandum Number 53* (Ottawa: August 1945), 11; United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle, Part I, Enemy Methods* (Delhi: Government of India Press, May 1943), 7; Pat Carmichael, *Mountain Battery: Burma 1942* (Bournemouth: Devin Books, 1983), 66, 70-71; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare, Information Bulletin No. 8,* 9; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *The Punch Below the Belt: Japanese Ruses, Deception Tactics, and Antipersonnel Measures,* Special Series No. 33 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 August 1945), 32; and Ramli, 97.

[6] Japanese doctrine dictated that commanders employ tanks in a “mobile mass,” but in practice they normally parceled them out as infantry support.

[7] United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 1 and 10; Tsuji, 71; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Land Operations,* 27; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* 12; U.S. War Department, Handbook *on Japanese Military Forces, 89*; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare, Information Bulletin No. 12, 2*5; Brink, 1; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27*,* 170.

[8] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Japanese Tank Tactics* (Washington: 30 June 1945), 2; United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 1 and 10; Tsuji, 71; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Land Operations,* 27; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* Special Series No. 25*,* 12; U.S. War Department, Handbook *on Japanese Military Forces,* 89; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 12*,* 25; Brink, 1; and U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27*,* 170.

[9] Hough, 199; and Tsuji, 113.

[10] Anthony Reid and Oki Akira, 42; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Land Operations,* 11; Slim, 16; United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 1, 10, and 19; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Warfare: A Summary* Information Bulletin No. 16*,* 18; and Stanton, 26.

[11] United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 11; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 7 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 24 January 1942), 4; Chapman, 27; Hough, 13; Brink, 2 and 4; and Carmichael, 58-60.

[12] United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 10, 11, and 16; U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Japanese Infiltration Techniques in the Philippine Campaign* (Washington: 28 July 1945), 9; and Brink, 4.

[13] U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Forces, Far East (Military History Section), *Bandjermasin Invasion Operations Record,* 6-7; U.S. Army, Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, *Battle Experiences Against the Japanese* (1 May 1945), 18; Ramli, 61; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Soldier's Guide to the Japanese Army,* Special Series No. 27, 149; and Chiaravalle, 11.

[14] United Kingdom, General Headquarters, India, Military Intelligence Directorate, *Japanese In Battle,* Second Edition, 11 and 15; U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Land Operations,* 27 and 46; and Brink, 8.

[15] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service, *Japanese Land Operations,* 3; and Clear, 16.

[16] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Japanese Field Artillery,* Special Series No. 25*,* 16; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces, 98*; U.S. Army, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, *Combat Lessons Gained from Overseas Operations,* 44 and 47; and U.S. Army, Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces, Far East, and Eighth U.S. Army, Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, *Japanese Night Combat,* vol.1*,* 49-51 and 69.

[17] U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence School, Military Intelligence Service*, Japanese Tactics and Techniques,* 3.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Behind the myth of the Japanese "Jungle Superman" there is both exaggeration and truth. Despite the hyperbole of wartime Allied leaders, the Japanese Army was neither designed nor consciously prepared by Imperial Headquarters for the harsh war it would fight in the jungles of the Southwest Pacific. On the contrary, the Japanese had no doctrine, training, or experience in jungle operations. Committed to a region it was totally unprepared to fight in, the IJA had to overcome a myriad of problems to even get to the battlefield. At the strategic level Japan lacked well thought out, attainable national goals, and had no effective command structure to unify the efforts of her Army and Navy. Operationally, the Navy was unable to maintain a sufficient flow of supplies into the theater, and even if it could have, the Army could not have pushed the supplies forward to the fighting units. Despite these critical flaws, in less than six months the Japanese seized Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific region, defeating the combined Pacific armed forces of the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

One of Japan's key assets was the proficiency of her individual soldiers and leaders. The IJA's spartan training program produced some of the finest light infantry of World War II. Japanese infantrymen were extremely well disciplined, and were heedless of hardship and danger. Japan believed that her soldiers' powerful fighting spirit and their skill in bayonet and hand-to-hand combat would overcome other armies' superiority in material goods, and the Japanese leadership designed an army that capitalized on these traits. The Japanese conscription system gave the IJA a huge pool of fully trained soldiers, NCOs, and officers to draw from when it had to expand early in the war. Additionally, Japan was able to call upon even larger numbers of partially trained troops when the need arose. The system of manning units with conscripts from the same

region ensured that most Japanese soldiers went to war keenly aware of their obligation to uphold the reputations of their families and regiments–veterans would almost certainly discuss their hometown comrades' battlefield performance when they returned to their villages. As a result, even newly formed Japanese divisions went into battle better-trained and more cohesive than equivalent conscript formations in most other armies. Significantly, three of the eleven IJA divisions that fought in the Centrifugal Offensive—the 48th, 55th, and 56th—had not previously been in battle. All performed well.

The Japanese conducted the Centrifugal Offensive in Southeast Asia with an army equipped to fight the Soviet Army on the plains of Manchuria. Ironically, although much of the IJA's equipment was ill suited for battle against the Soviets on open terrain,



Figure 31. Advance guard unit crossing damaged wooden trestle bridge. *Source:* U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Notes on Japanese Warfare,* Information Bulletin No. 9 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 22 February 1942), 16.

it was ideal for the battlefields of the Pacific. While enclosed jungle terrain negated any "standoff range" advantages of Allied weapons, it rendered most Japanese weapons' engineering shortfalls irrelevant. Japanese tanks, useless in tank-to-tank combat against Allied armor, could move through places that Allied planners believed impassable. Because Japanese equipment was light and usually man portable, IJA soldiers were more mobile than their motorized opponents, and they were often able to appear unexpectedly, in force, on lightly defended Allied flanks. Japanese equipment thus provided the IJA with a powerful, accidental battlefield advantage that many Western analysts erroneously attributed to Japanese foresight and pre-planning.

The Imperial Japanese Army's success during the Centrifugal Offensive stemmed primarily from its pre-war tactical doctrine, which, fortuitously for the Japanese, was easily adapted to jungle warfare. The IJA's doctrinal focus on the offensive, and its consequent tactical emphasis on envelopments, encirclements, speed, and personal initiative at all levels consistently defeated Allied defenses for most of the campaign. The fatal weakness in the IJA's doctrine was revealed during General Homma's first assaults against the defenses on the Bataan Peninsula—a defending enemy had to have assailable flanks for Japanese tactics to work. Penetrations relied upon mass, not spirit and initiative. Until the Allies discovered this weakness, however, the IJA consistently succeeded in attacks against numerically superior adversaries.

The great irony of the Centrifugal Offensive is that, despite the IJA's doctrinal reliance on fighting spirit, spirit took a secondary role to material superiority for the Japanese in many instances throughout the campaign. Although it undeniably took spirited troops to attack British brigades with only a handful of tanks, the psychological shock of being faced by tanks where none were expected was often what caused the British to retreat. Similarly, when the IJA 14th Army was initially unable to penetrate the

powerful U.S.-Philippine defenses on Bataan, the Japanese found that increasing the vigor of their attacks was not sufficient to attain victory. They had to increase the strength of their assault forces to succeed. Likewise, in the Netherlands East Indies the Japanese often massed overwhelming forces against successive Allied garrisons to compel a quick surrender. To be fair, these examples represent exceptions to the IJA's usual procedure during the campaign. These exceptions, however, show that even at its zenith, the IJA could not rely exclusively on superior spirit to ensure victory—sometimes they needed superior numbers and material as well. Hindsight shows us that when the Japanese lost the ability to mass their ground forces to gain local superiority, the "Jungle Superman" was not always invincible. In short, the IJA's belief that spirit, swords, and bayonets by themselves could defeat any foe was the source of both their initial victories and their ultimate defeat in World War II.

Lessons

The Japanese success during the Centrifugal Offensive teaches several lessons that remain applicable. First, the campaign revalidates a theme from the writings of both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz: numerical superiority by itself confers no advantage. A clever, aggressive enemy will always seek out and attack weakness. Despite their numerical inferiority, the Japanese capitalized on Allied weaknesses in deployment and doctrine in the Southwest Pacific with great success. Today, there is much spirited discussion about "asymmetric threats," but the concept is not new. As the IJA did during the Centrifugal Offensive, any wise attacker attacks weakness rather than strength.

Another important lesson is that properly trained soldiers can adapt to unexpected situations. The IJA was unprepared to fight a jungle campaign, and when Imperial Headquarters decided to seize Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, there

was no time for extensive pre-deployment training. As a result, IJA units fought in an environment totally unlike the one in which they had trained. The Japanese overcame this difficulty by relying on the training and discipline of their soldiers, who adapted brilliantly. When soldiers found a given item of equipment to be unsuited to the jungle environment, they stopped carrying it. When units found themselves without adequate information about their area of operations, they hired local guides to help them maximize their use of the surrounding terrain. The Japanese were not surprised to learn that units trained to the highest standards in regimental bases near Tokyo or Kyoto continued to perform well when sent to fight on the Malay Peninsula or the Philippine island of Mindanao. The U.S. Army is re-learning the same lesson today in its peacekeeping deployments across the globe: even without specialized predeployment training, well trained soldiers will quickly adapt to unfamiliar environments and missions, and will perform well. In short, good soldiers are good soldiers, regardless of the tasks their leaders assign.

Perhaps the most important lesson of the Centrifugal Offensive is the importance of training leaders to use their initiative. Japanese junior leaders appear to have developed their initiative through the army's focus on fighting spirit. In training and in combat, a Japanese platoon leader could expect to be praised if he assaulted an enemy unit on his own authority, even when his actions were in direct contravention of his commander's orders. Because the Japanese believed that such actions came naturally to leaders with a pure fighting spirit, commanders seldom punished officers who behaved in such a manner. Therefore, commanders frequently found themselves without a usable tactical reserve, because their subordinate leaders had already opted to join battle without waiting for orders. At the national level, junior officers with a "pure fighting spirit" sometimes took it upon themselves to assassinate political leaders with

whom they disagreed. Japanese courts usually dealt with such offenders as lightly as their counterparts in the field did. In both cases, senior leaders' actions demonstrated to their juniors that initiative and fighting spirit were more important than the strict obedience to the letter of an order or law.

While the drawbacks of the pre-war Japanese approach to instilling initiative are clear, the method is instructive. If senior leaders consistently present their subordinates with ambiguous tactical situations that require junior officers to use initiative, and then reward those officers who react appropriately, junior officers will quickly learn that initiative is important. Conversely, junior officers who are rewarded for blind obedience to the letter of every tactical directive, regardless of the actual situation, will learn that their leaders value obedience above independent judgement. Happily, the U.S. Army's doctrine of providing a tactical purpose to each task provides the necessary framework for such initiative training. Teach leaders that their tactical purpose is more important that the specific task they are assigned, and they will soon develop and use initiative appropriate to the situations they face.

The Imperial Japanese Army won the Centrifugal Offensive despite a staggering array of obstacles at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. IJA leaders attacked enemy weakness rather than strength, and IJA soldiers used their training and toughness to overcome all of the environmental and tactical difficulties they faced. Despite their inferior numbers, the Japanese capitalized on their advantages and shocked the world with their improbable victory. While the U.S. Army cannot expect to be faced with opponents as inept as those the Japanese were faced with during the Centrifugal Offensive, the history of that campaign clearly holds useful lessons for the modern military professional.

APPENDIX A

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1937	
7 July	Marco Polo Bridge Incident. An IJA unit is fired upon at Marco Polo Bridge, near Wanping, in Manchuria. The Japanese government uses the resulting two-day exchange of shots between Japanese and Nationalist Chinese forces as justification for invading the rest of the Chinese mainland.
1939	
1 July	Beginning of the two month Battle of Nomonhan, where the IJA 7th and 23d Divisions are annihilated by Soviet forces in a border dispute in Manchuria.
Summer	Japanese forces blockade British and French businesses in Tientsin in response to European support for the Chinese.
	The United States revokes its 28-year old commercial treaty with Japan.
1940	
27 September	Japan signs Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy.
1941	
1 January	IJA forms the Taiwan Army Research Unit to study tropical warfare.
11 April	Japan signs neutrality pact with the Soviet Union.
23 July	Vichy government agrees to “temporary occupation” of French Indochina by the Japanese. Japanese forces land the next day.
25 July	U.S. and Britain freeze Japanese assets in response to Japanese landings in Indochina.
26 July	President Roosevelt creates the U.S. Army Forces Far East, recalling Douglas MacArthur to active duty as its commanding general.
28 July	Netherlands East Indies suspends trade with Japan.

29 July	U.S. embargoes all oil shipments to Japan.
5 August	British reinforce Singapore. Additional forces arrive 15 August and 3 September.
7 August	Japan disclaims aggressive intentions against Thailand.
16 October	Unable to gain a diplomatic settlement to problems with the West, Japanese cabinet resigns.
17 October	Emperor Hirohito orders General Hideki Tojo to form a new cabinet.
8 December	IJN aircraft attack Pearl Harbor, destroying most of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.
	Japanese aircraft bomb the Philippine Islands, Guam, Wake Island, and Midway.
	15th IJA Army moves into Thailand from French Indochina.
	25th IJA Army forces seize Singora and Patani in Thailand, and Kota Bharu in Malaya, initiating the invasion of Malaya.
	38th IJA Division invades Hong Kong.
	14th IJA Army forces land on Batan Island, the Philippines.
9 December	14th IJA Army forces land at Aparri, on the main Philippine island of Luzon.
10 December	Japanese aircraft sink the Royal Navy ships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales,* effectively gaining control of the sea against the British in Malaya.
11 December	15th IJA Army seizes Victoria Point in Burma, initiating the invasion of Burma
19 December	15th IJA Army seizes Tavoy in Burma, securing forward air bases for future use.
22 December	Three IJA regiments from the 14th Army land in Lingayen Gulf, the Philippines, initiating the main landings in the Philippines.
24 December	16th Division of 14th IJA Army lands at Lamon Bay, the Philippines, to assist the forces that landed in Lingayen Gulf.
26 December	MacArthur declares Philippine capital of Manila an open city.

1942

2 January	14th IJA Army takes Philippine capital of Manila.
5 January	British Hong Kong garrison surrenders.
6 January	14th IJA Army pushes combined U.S./Philippine forces back to the Bataan Peninsula.
9 January	Initial 14th IJA Army attack on Bataan Peninsula forces U.S./Philippine forces to their secondary defensive positions.
11 January	16th IJA Army begins operations against the Netherlands East Indies.
26 January	Second 14th IJA Army attack on Bataan Peninsula repulsed by U.S./Philippine forces. Japanese pull back to await reinforcements.
31 January	Last Allied forces on Malaya retreat to Singapore Island.
9 February	Netherlands East Indies islands of Celebes and Ceram surrender.
9-10 February	25th IJA Army attacks Singapore Island.
13 February	Allied defenders on Singapore island retreat to the city of Singapore.
15 February	Singapore surrenders.
	Netherlands East Indies islands of Timor and Sumatra surrender.
28 February	16th IJA Army forces land on Java.
8 March	Allied forces in the Netherlands East Indies surrender.
	IJA seizes Burmese port city of Rangoon
3 April	Reinforced 14th IJA Army attacks Bataan Peninsula a third time.
9 April	Allied forces on Bataan surrender.
9 May	Allied forces on Corregidor Island surrender, ending organized Allied resistance in the Philippines.
11 May	15th IJA Army defeats Allied forces in Burma at Kalewa, near the Indian border.
20 May	Last Allied forces retreat from Burma into India.

APPENDIX B

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY ORDER OF BATTLE
FOR THE CENTRIFUGAL OFFENSIVE

NOTE: The information in this section is from Mainichi Newspaper Company's *Nippon no Senshi, Dai 7 to 8 Kan, Taiheiyo Senso 1 to 2* (Japanese Military History, Volumes 7 and 8, Pacific War Parts 1 and 2) (Tokyo: Mainichi Newspaper Company, 1978). At this writing, no English language references known to this author address the IJA's Centrifugal Offensive order of battle in detail below the division level.

SOUTHERN ARMY
Field Marshal Count Hisaichi Terauchi

14th ARMY
Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma
Chief of Staff: Lieutenant General Masami Maeda

16th DIVISION
Based in Kyoto. Formed in 1905.
Lieutenant General Takashi Morioka
16th Infantry Group
Major General Naoki Kimura
9th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yoshio Uejima
20th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yorikatsu Yoshioka
33d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tatsunosuke Suzuki
16th Reconnaissance Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Tetsuto Matsuda
22d Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Akira Ito
16th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Yoshiyoki Kato
16th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Matayoshi Kichigami

48th DIVISION (detached to the 16th Army on 14 January 1942)
Based in Formosa. Formed in late 1940.
Lieutenant General Yuitsu Tsuchihashi
48th Infantry Group
Major General Koichi Abe
Formosan 1st Infantry Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Hifumi Imai
Formosa 2d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tohru Tanaka
47th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Isao Yanagi
48th Reconnaissance Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kuro Kitamura
48th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kayoshi Yamaguchi
48th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Toshio Yanagi
48th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Toshi Tasaka

65th Infantry Brigade
Based in Fukuyama. Formed in April 1941.
Lieutenant General Akira Nara
122d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Unosuke Watanabe
141st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Takeo Imai
142d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Masataro Yoshizawa
65th Brigade Engineer Unit
Major Yoshima Horiike

4th DIVISION (attached 10 February 1942)
Based in Osaka. Formed in 1870.
Lieutenant General Kenzo Kitano
4th Infantry Group
Major General GoroTaniguchi
8th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Haruji Morita
37th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Jiro Koura
61st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Genpachi Sato
4th Cavalry Regiment
Colonel Yasu Imai
4th Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Tatsuzo Inoue
4th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Junichi Hiramatsu
4th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Tomoyoshi Yano

NAGANO DETACHMENT (attached 11 February 1942)
(Elements of 21st DIVISION)
Based in Kanazawa. Formed between July and November 1938.
21st Infantry Group
Major General Kameichiro Nagano
62d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Kumataro Ota
3d Battalion, 51st Mountain Artillery Regiment
21st Engineer Regiment (less one company)

KAWAMURA DETACHMENT (attached March 1942)
(Elements of 5th DIVISION)
Based in Hiroshima. Formed in 1873.
9th Infantry Brigade
Major General Sanro Kawamura
41st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Haruma Yazawa
16th Reconnaissance Regiment (one platoon)
20th Independent Mountain Artillery Battalion
22d Field Artillery Regiment (one battery)
23d Independent Engineer Regiment (one company)
26th Independent Engineer Regiment (one platoon)

KAWAGUCHI DETACHMENT (attached 10 March 1942)
(Elements of 18th DIVISION)
Based in Kurume. Formed in September 1937.
35th Infantry Brigade
Major General Seiken Kawaguchi
124th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Akenosuke Oka
21st Heavy Field Artillery Battalion (one battery)
26th Independent Engineer Regiment (one company)
16th Reconnaissance Regiment (one platoon)
22d Field Artillery Regiment (one battery)
23d Independent Engineer Regiment (one platoon)
44th Port Operations Unit

10th Independent Garrison Defense Unit
Colonel Yorao Ikuta
31st Independent Infantry Garrison Defense Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Yoshinari Tanaka
32d Independent Infantry Garrison Defense Battalion
Colonel Jinkichi Minami
33d Independent Infantry Garrison Defense Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Yoshimi Seno
34th Independent Infantry Garrison Defense Battalion
Major Utaka Naisho
35th Independent Infantry Garrison Defense Battalion
Colonel Tomonaka Yoshie

ARMY ARTILLERY UNIT
Lieutenant General Iko Kitajima
22d Field Artillery Regiment
1st Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
8th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
1st Heavy Artillery Regiment
9th Independent Heavy Artillery Battalion
2d Independent Heavy Artillery Battery
3d Artillery Transportation Unit
1st Meteorological Company
5th Artillery Intelligence Regiment
Wireless Unit

UNITS UNDER ARMY CONTROL:
2d Independent Mortar Battalion
14th Independent Mortar Battalion
15th Independent Mortar Battalion
Independent Antitank Companies (2)
4th Tank Regiment
7th Tank Regiment
3d Independent Mountain Artillery Regiment
Independent Anti Aircraft Artillery Battalions (4)
3d Company, 5th Independent Engineer Regiment
3d Trench Mortar Battalion
6th Railway Regiment
10th Independent Engineer Regiment
21st Independent Engineer Regiment
28th Independent Engineer Regiment

15th ARMY

Lieutenant General Shojiro Iida
Chief of Staff: Major General Haruk Soyama

33d DIVISION (-)
Based in Sendai. Formed in March 1939.
Lieutenant General Shoji Sakurai
Chief of Staff: Major General Takao Murata
213th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Kosuke Miyawaki
214th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Takayoshi Sakuma
215th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Mune Harada
33d Mountain Artillery Regiment
Colonel Masao Fukuie
33d Engineer Regiment
Colonel Shigeru Yagi
33d Transportation Regiment
Colonel Momozaburo Chinta

55th DIVISION (-)
Based in Zentsuji. Formed in August 1940.
Lieutenant General Kan Takeuchi
Chief of Staff: Colonel Gennosuke Kato
112th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Zozo Obarazawa
143d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Setsu Uno
55th Cavalry Regiment
Colonel Yoshizo Kawashima
55th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Colonel Takeshi Uga
55th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Uichi Sotoga
55th Transportation Regiment
Colonel Chihei Kio

56th DIVISION (attached in March 1942)
Based in Kurume. Formed in August 1940.
Lieutenant General Masao Watanabe
Chief of Staff: Colonel Takeshi Fujiwara
113th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Hideji Matsui
146th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Ryohei Yamamoto
148th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Karoku Matsumoto
56th Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Muneji Tomi
56th Engineer Regiment
Colonel Tsuneo Ejima
56th Reconnaissance Regiment
Colonel Usuke Hirai
56th Transportation Regiment
Colonel Koichi Ikeda

18th DIVISION (-) (attached in late March 1942)
Based in Kurume. Formed in September 1937.
Major General Renya Mutaguchi
Chief of Staff: Colonel Ju Takeda
23d Infantry Brigade
Major General Akira Hibi
55th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Dai Koba
56th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yoshi Nasu
114th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Hisashi Oku
22d Cavalry Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Jiroku Nagahashi
18th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Katsutoshi Takasu
12th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kazue Fujii
12th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Shogoro Nakao

UNITS UNDER ARMY CONTROL:
1st Independent Antitank Battalion
1st Tank Regiment
14th Tank Regiment
3d Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
18th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment
51st Air Defense Artillery Battalion
4th Independent Engineer Regiment
20th Independent Engineer Regiment
5th Railroad Regiment

16th ARMY

Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura
Chief of Staff: Major General Seizaburo Okazaki

2d DIVISION
Based in Sendai. Formed 1870.
Lieutenant General Masao Maruyama
2d Infantry Group
Major General Nasu Yumio
4th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Kyusaku Fukushima
16th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Juro Hiroyasu
29th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Hanshichi Sato
2d Reconnaissance Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Tetsuichi Noguchi
2d Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Masuo Ishizaki
2d Engineer Regiment
Colonel Takuzo Takahashi
2d Transportation Regiment
Colonel Riichi Nimura

38th DIVISION (assigned after the 5 January surrender of Hong Kong)
Based in Nagoya. Formed in February 1939.
Lieutenant General Tadayoshi Sano
38th Infantry Group
Major General Takeo Ito
228th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Norishichi Doi
229th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Ryozaburo Tanaka
230th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Toshinari Shoji
38th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Colonel Takekichi Kamiyoshi
38th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Yoshio Iwabuchi
Tankette Unit
38th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Shuichi Yabuta

Detachments: During the invasion of the Netherlands East Indies, the 38th Division detached the following two units for independent operations in Java in February 1942. The remainder of the 38th Division participated in the invasion of southern Sumatra:

Shoji Detachment
Colonel Toshinari Shoji (230th Infantry Regiment Commander)
230th Infantry Regiment
1st Company, 4th Tank Regiment
3d Battalion, 38th Mountain Artillery Regiment (less one battery)
2d Independent Antitank Battalion (less two companies)
Engineer Company (1)
Antiaircraft Company (1)

Eastern Detachment
Major General Takeo Ito (38th Infantry Group Commanding General)
228th Infantry Regiment
2d Battalion, 38th Mountain Artillery Regiment (less two batteries)

48th DIVISION (attached 14 January 1942)
Based in Formosa. Formed in late 1940.
Lieutenant General Yuitsu Tsuchihashi
48th Infantry Group
Major General Koichi Abe
Formosan 1st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Hifumi Imai
Formosa 2d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tohru Tanaka
47th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Isao Yanagi
48th Reconnaissance Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kuro Kitamura
48th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kayoshi Yamaguchi
48th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Toshio Yanagi
Kanemura Detachment
Major Mataba Kanemura (3d Battalion, Formosan 1st Infantry Regiment commander)
3d Battalion, Formosan 1st Infantry Regiment (less one company)
One platoon of Mountain Artillery
One Independent Engineer Platoon

SAKAGUCHI DETACHMENT
(Elements of 56th DIVISION)
Based in Kurume. Formed in August 1940.
56th Infantry Group
Major General Shizuo Sakaguchi
146th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Ryohei Yamamoto
Tankette Unit
1st Battalion, 56th Field Artillery Regiment

KAWAGUCHI DETACHMENT (detached to 14th Army 10 March 1942)
(Elements of 18th DIVISION)
Based in Kurume. Formed in September 1937.
35th Infantry Brigade
Major General Seiken Kawaguchi
124th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Akenosuke Oka
21st Heavy Field Artillery Battalion (one battery)
26th Independent Engineer Regiment (one company)
16th Reconnaissance Regiment (one platoon)
22d Field Artillery Regiment (one battery)
23d Independent Engineer Regiment (one platoon)
44th Port Operations Unit

UNITS UNDER ARMY CONTROL:
2d Tank Regiment (less its light tank company)
Colonel Isao Mori
4th Tank Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Shoji Kumagai
17th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment (Self Propelled)
2d Independent Antitank Battalion
5th Independent Antitank Battalion
18th Air Defense Artillery Unit Headquarters
16th Air Defense Artillery Regiment
23d Air Defense Artillery Regiment
44th Air Defense Field Artillery Battalion
45th Air Defense Field Artillery Battalion
48th Air Defense Field Artillery Battalion
15th Telephone Regiment
2d Field Transportation Headquarters
39th Independent Transportation Battalion
45th Independent Transportation Battalion
102d Independent Transportation Battalion
28th Transportation Regiment

INDEPENDENT GROUND FORCES (NON-16th ARMY):
1st Army Airborne Unit (Airborne)
Sasebo Combined Special Naval Landing Force (Regiment)
Captain Kunizo Mori, IJN
1st Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion)
2d Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion)
Commander Masanari Shiga, IJN
Yokosuka 1st Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion) (Airborne)
Commander Toyoaki Horiuchi, IJN
Yokosuka 2d Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion)
Yokosuka 3d Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion) (Airborne)
Kure 1st Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion)
Kure 2d Special Naval Landing Force (Battalion)

25th ARMY

Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita
Chief of Staff: Lieutenant General Munesake Suzuki

IMPERIAL GUARDS DIVISION (detached to 16th Army 8 March 1942)
Based in Tokyo, recruited nationwide. Formed in 1867.
Lieutenant General Takuma Nishimura
Chief of Staff: Colonel Kamejiro Imai
Guards Infantry Group
Major General Takashi Kobayashi
3d Guards Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yoshiro Kinuma
4th Guards Infantry Regiment
Colonel Sengi Masaki (replaced by Colonel Kentaro Kuniji on 2 January 1942)
5th Guards Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tsuyo Iwaguro (replaced by Colonel Toshiho Sawamura on 5 February 1942)
Guards Reconnaissance Regiment
Colonel Uzo Kitayama
Guards Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Yasuo Nomura
Guards Engineer Regiment
Colonel Teichiro Kanehara
Guards Transportation Regiment
Colonel Hatsuyuri Matsuyama

Detachments: The Imperial Guards Division detached the following three units for operations during the invasion of northern Sumatra, Netherlands East Indies in March 1942. The remainder of the division, with the 6th Tank Regiment (-) attached, fought in northern Sumatra under the command of Lieutenant General Nishimura:

Kobayashi Detachment
Major General Takashi Kobayashi (Guards Infantry Group commander)
3d Guards Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yoshiro Kinuma
1st Battalion, Guards Field Artillery Regiment

Kuniji Detachment
Colonel Kentaro Kuniji (4th Guards Infantry Regiment commander)
4th Guards Infantry Regiment (-)
5th Trench Mortar Battalion
6th Tank Regiment (one company)
15th Independent Engineer Regiment (-)
Lieutenant Colonel Yosuke Yokoyama

Yoshida Detachment
Lieutenant Colonel Masaru Yoshida (3d Battalion, 4th Guards Infantry Regiment commander)
3d Battalion, 4th Guards Infantry Regiment
15th Independent Engineer Regiment (one company)

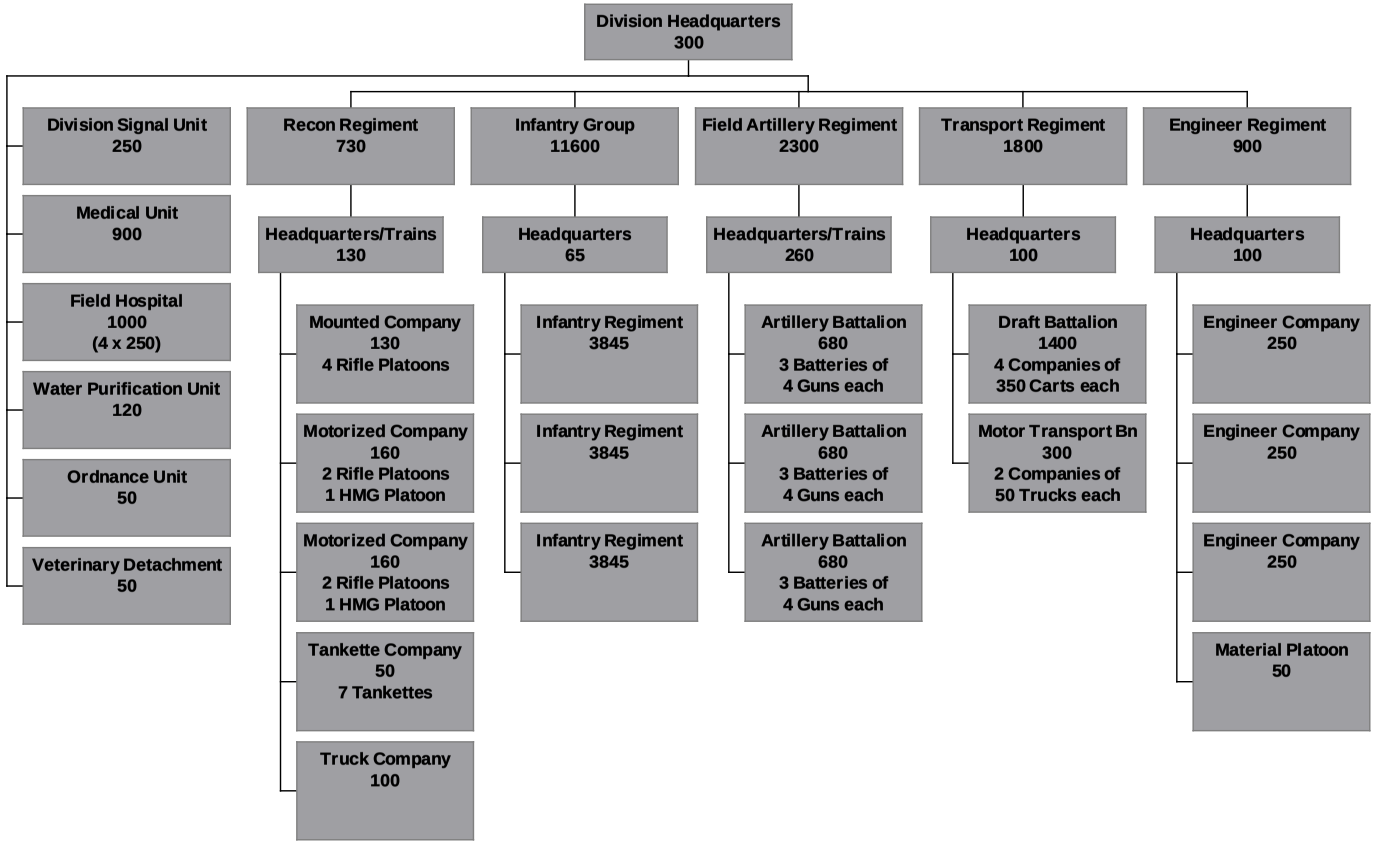
5th DIVISION
Based in Hiroshima. Formed in 1873.
Lieutenant General Takuro Matsui
Chief of Staff: Colonel Shigetada Kaetsu
9th Infantry Brigade
Major General Saburo Kawamura
11th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tsunahiko Watanabe
41st Infantry Regiment (detached to 14th Army March 1942)
Colonel Kanichi Okabe
21st Infantry Brigade
Major General Hideyoshi Sugiura
21st Infantry Regiment
Colonel Noriyoshi Harada
42d Infantry Regiment
Colonel Tadao Ando
5th Reconnaissance Regiment
Colonel Shizuo Saeki
5th Field Artillery Regiment
Colonel Minekichi Nakahira
5th Engineer Regiment
Colonel Yasuji Tamura
5th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Takayuki Ueki

18th DIVISION (-) (detached to 15th Army in late March 1942)
Based in Kurume. Formed in September 1937.
Major General Renya Mutaguchi
Chief of Staff: Colonel Ju Takeda
23d Infantry Brigade
Major General Akira Hibi
55th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Dai Koba
56th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Yoshi Nasu
114th Infantry Regiment
Colonel Hisashi Oku
18th Mountain Artillery Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Katsutoshi Takasu
12th Engineer Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Kazue Fujii
12th Transportation Regiment
Lieutenant Colonel Shogoro Nakao

UNITS UNDER ARMY CONTROL:
3d TANK BRIGADE
1st Tank Regiment
2d Tank Regiment (detached to 16th Army on 4 January 1942)
6th Tank Regiment
Colonel Tadao Komoto
14th Tank Regiment
ENGINEER BRIGADE
14th Engineer Regiment
23d Engineer Regiment (River Crossing)
26th Engineer Regiment
15th Independent Engineer Regiment (Bridging)
Lieutenant Colonel Yosuke Yokoyama

APPENDIX C

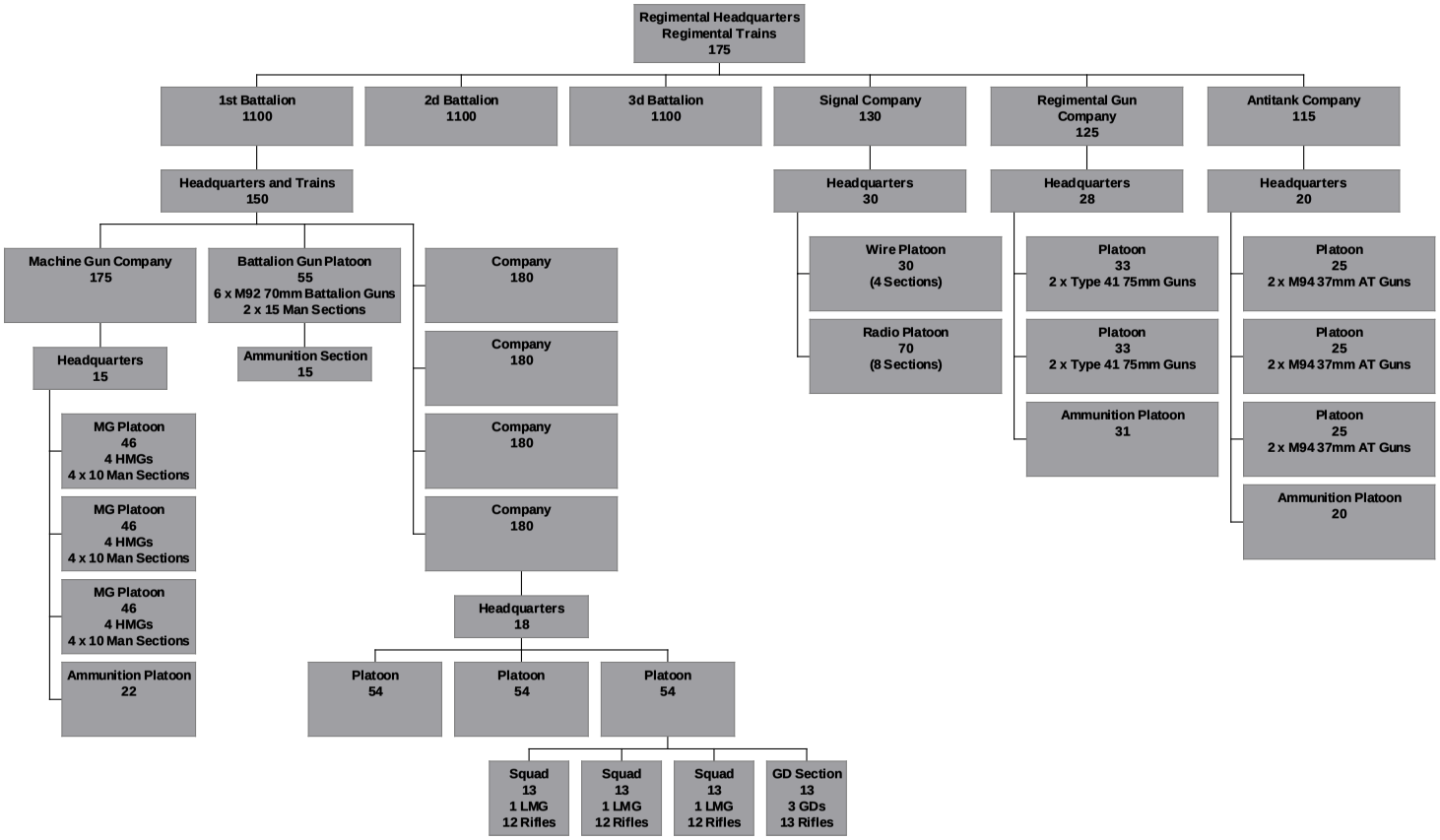
IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY "STANDARD" TRIANGULAR INFANTRY DIVISION



NOTE: All eleven IJA divisions that fought in the Centrifugal Offensive were configured as triangular divisions. Nine (Guards, 2d, 4th, 16th, 33d, 38th, 48th, 55th, and 56th) were formally organized as triangular divisions, while two (5th and 8th--formally organized as square divisions with two brigades of two regiments each) had one brigade headquarters and one regiment detached from them (Kawamura Detachment from the 5th and Kawaguchi Detachment from the 18th) for independent operations.

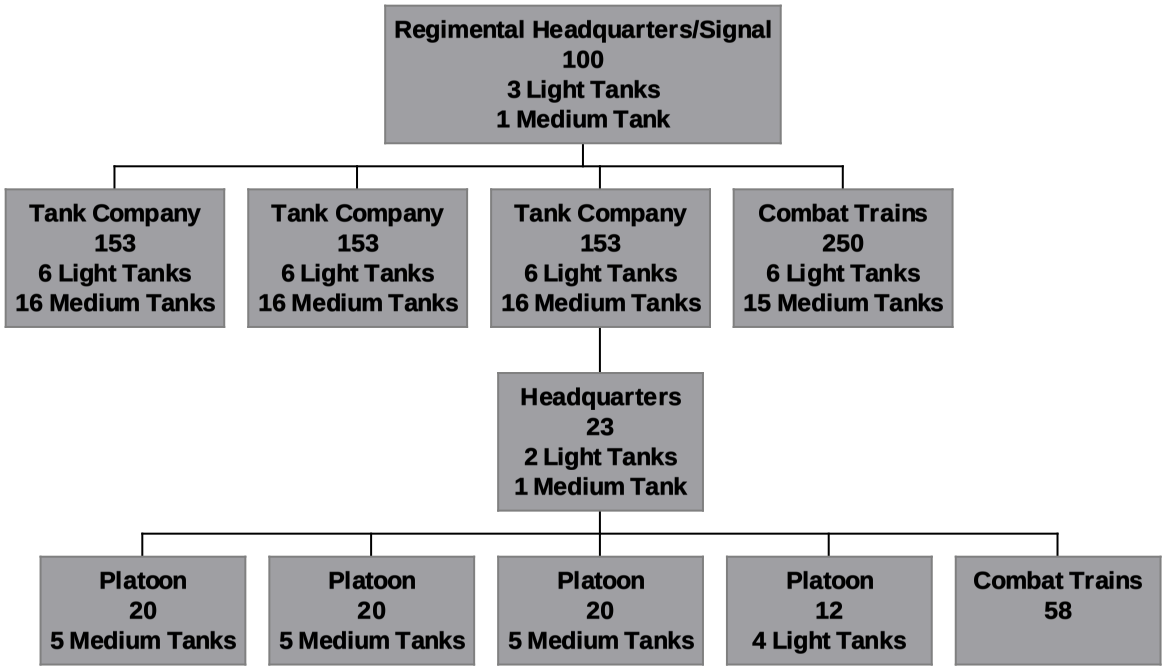
APPENDIX D

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY
INFANTRY REGIMENT TO&E



APPENDIX E

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY
TANK REGIMENT TO&E



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