

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF WORLD WAR II JAPANESE AIRCRAFT IN AUSTRALIA: THE CASE STUDY OF HAJIME TOYOSHIMA'S ZERO

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ABSTRACT

During World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) and Army (IJA) carried out a series of air raids on northern Australia. The Bombing of Darwin by the IJN on 19 February 1942 was the most significant foreign attack in mainland Australia since the colonisation of Australia by the British Empire. One of the IJN Zero fighters flown by a petty officer, Hajime Toyoshima, was force-landed on Melville Island, north of Darwin. The pilot was subsequently captured by an Indigenous man, Matthias Ulungura, and became the first Japanese prisoner of war on Australian soil. This study examines historical records and remains of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials currently displayed in three museums around Darwin to answer the research questions of why and how the utilisation of the wreckage of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials have changed over time. Close examination with 3D photogrammetry recording of the wreckage shows characteristics of the early model of Mitsubishi M6A2b Type 0 Model 21 carrier fighter and evidence of use of this aircraft wreckage. Examination of related materials also indicate debatable authenticities. Despite the questionable legitimacies of these related materials, exhibitions of museums utilize them in their attempted recreations of the past event. Furthermore, those materials reflect the social value shifts that those items went through. This study focuses on interactions between Australians, which includes the Indigenous people, and the IJN aircraft.

KEYWORDS: World War II, Aviation, Japan, Australia

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INTRODUCTION

World War II (WWII) significantly impacted Australia, as it was the first time in post-colonial Australian history that foreign forces attacked the country. From 1942 to 1945, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) and Army (IJA) conducted a series of air raids in northern Australia (Lewis and Claringbould 2020), combined with naval attacks by the Japanese and German navies in Australian waters (Lewis 2010; McCarthy 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Smith 2008), which greatly influenced the country's establishment of a national identity independent from the British Empire. The Bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 was the first and largest Japanese air raid in Australia. During the raid, a Mitsubishi A6M2b Model 21 Zero (Zeke) fighter flown by Petty Officer Hajime Toyoshima and launched from IJN aircraft carrier *Hiryu*, was forced to land on Melville Island. Toyoshima became the first prisoner of war (POW) in Australia (Alford 2011, 38–39). The remains of the aircraft and related materials, including the propeller, Toyoshima's pistol and a statue of the Indigenous man, Matthias Ulungura, who captured the pilot, are displayed in three museums in Darwin and Bathurst Island, serving as significant mementoes of the war for Australian, Indigenous, and Japanese history. This study focuses on how Australians and Indigenous people have utilised the wreckage of the Japanese aircraft and related materials.

RESEARCH QUESTION

As a research question, this study will focus on why and how utilisations of the wreckage of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials have transformed over time. This research pursues the following four avenues to address the question. Firstly, historical documents and records of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials will be examined. Secondly, the current condition of the Zero in the Darwin Aviation Museum will be recorded and analysed to observe any trace of utilisations. Thirdly, related materials and displays in three museums (the Darwin Aviation Museum, the Patakijiyali Museum, and the Darwin Military Museum) will be observed. Lastly, the gathered data will be interpreted to understand human behaviours towards materials related to the war.

THE BOMBING OF DARWIN

The Bombing of Darwin occurred on 19 February 1942, several days after the fall of Singapore, and was a combination of two raids. The first raid was carried out by IJN and led by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo and his First Mobile Striking Force ('Mobile Fleet'). Even though the Mobile Fleet is often called the 'Nagumo Force', later historians evaluate Nagumo as a 'largely passive and not terribly innovative' commander (Parshall and Tully 2005, 17). Nagumo was, however, fortunate to have talented young officers such as Commander Minoru Genda, who designed this raid as well as the Pearl Harbor attack (Lewis and Ingram 2013, 50–51).

The first raid involved 188 IJN aircraft, including 36 Mitsubishi A6M2 'Zero (Zeke)' fighters, 71 Aichi D3A1 'Val' dive bombers, and 81 Nakajima 'Kate' bombers. Launched from four carriers – *Hiryu*, *Soryu*, *Kaga* and *Akagi* – the aircraft attacked Darwin in the morning (Lewis and Ingram 2013, 286). The Kates and Vals dropped a total of 82,800 kg of bombs (Lewis and Ingram 2013, 88). Their primary targets were merchant and navy ships in the harbour and port facilities, such as Stokes Hill Wharf and oil tanks. Some bombs hit the city area and destroyed a post office, possibly because of overshoots (Lewis and Ingram 2013, 82–83). Twenty-one ships in the harbour were heavily damaged or sunk during the raid. The exact number is uncertain, but at least 252 people were killed, and 350 were injured during the first raid (Alford 2011, 34).

IJA carried out the second raid, which involved 54 land-based bombers, a combination of 27 Mitsubishi G4M1 'Betty' bombers from Kendari in Sulawesi and 27 Mitsubishi G3M1 'Nell' bombers from Ambon on the Maluku Islands in the Netherlands East Indies, attacking Darwin over an hour after the first raid, at noon. The Nells and Bettys dropped a total of 32,050 kg of bombs and primarily targeted the airport (Lewis and Ingram 2013, 233).

DESK ASSESSMENT AND FIELD SURVEY

Desk-based research was conducted before a field survey in Darwin to gather historical records, photographs, and films to understand the interactions between people and the Zero. Primary sources, such as historical photographs, films, and archived official documents and reports, were collected to achieve historical accuracy, along with secondary sources like published books, websites, and newspapers. The Heritage Branch, Northern Territory Government, and a local historian, Bob Alford, kindly provided unpublished reports.

The collected data was utilised to aid the field survey in three museums: the Darwin Aviation Museum, the Darwin Military Museum, and the Patakijiyali Museum on Bathurst Island. The Darwin Aviation Museum exhibits the majority of the portion of Toyoshima's Zero and is run by the Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory (AHSNT) (Darwin Aviation Museum 2017). The Darwin Military Museum is run by the Northern Territory branch of the Royal Australian Artillery Association (RAAA) and has Hajime Toyoshima's pistol in their theatre-like exhibition (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission [ACNC] 2022). The Patakijiyali Museum is run by the Tiwi people and has a propeller from Toyoshima's Zero and a bronze statue of Matthias Ulungura

(O'Toole and La Cana 2017). As the examined materials were displayed in publicly accessible areas, no permission was needed except for recording the Zero at the Darwin Aviation Museum.

EXAMINATION AND 3D RECORDING OF THE ZERO

The photographic examination and 3D recording of Toyoshima's Zero, which are exhibited in the Darwin Aviation Museum, were planned to analyse the identification, current condition and traces of past utilisation of the aircraft. Permission to survey the remains of the Zero was granted by the committee of AHSNT in May 2021.

3D recordings and modelling of cultural heritages and archaeological sites are technologies that have recently been rapidly and widely adopted among researchers, especially maritime archaeologists (McCarthy et al. 2019, 1–2). These technologies are applied to recordings of aircraft wrecks and restored aircraft (Lickliter-Mundon 2018, 36).

For this research, photogrammetry was chosen as a 3D recording technique for three reasons. The first reason is that photogrammetry requires neither any contact nor the destruction of recording objects since it only requires photo shooting. The second reason is that photogrammetry can produce the desired accuracy and data resolution for this research. Finally, photogrammetry only requires low-cost equipment and one operator to record a feature.

HAJIME TOYOSHIMA ON MELVILLE ISLAND

Several Tiwi people's testimonies mention their encounters with Hajime Toyoshima on Melville Island. One Indigenous woman who first encountered Toyoshima on the island, Missus Aloysius, described her encounter with Toyoshima in her letter to a friend. She described that Toyoshima tried to communicate with them and even offered his watch to a boy they were taking care of (Lockwood 2013, 95). Although Toyoshima's approach to the Indigenous people was peaceful, Matthias Ulungra (Ngapiatilawai)'s disarming of Toyoshima as the first Japanese POW on Australian soil symbolises their encounter with Toyoshima (Riseman 2018, 138). Matthias described the event details when he approached Toyoshima from behind and told him, 'Hands up!' He took his revolver and a map (Lockwood 2013, 96). Without any resistance, Toyoshima was captured, and his flying suit, his Belgian .32 inch (8.1 mm) automatic pistol and his map were taken by Matthias. Later he was taken to the Australian Army on Bathurst Island and handed to Australian Army Sergeant Les Powell (Piper 1995, 58). Toyoshima said he was an air gunner from Ambon, and his name was Tadao Minami. He died during the infamous Cowra prison breakout in New South Wales on 5 August 1944 (Powell 2007, 91).

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE'S INVESTIGATIONS OF THE ZERO IN 1942

Despite Toyoshima's temptation to hide his identity and the existence of his wrecked Zero, Tiwi people traced his movements and found the wreck site. In early March 1942, a team of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) led by Indigenous men visited the site (see Figure 1). This was the first time in WWII that the Allies captured a fully intact Zero (Piper 1995, 60). Squadron Leader Sergeant Allan Beatty, one of the No. 13 Squadron (RAAF) from Darwin, led the investigation team and wrote his report on 7 March 1942 (NAA 1942).

Since it was impossible to carry the whole Zero with their manpower, the RAAF intelligence team partially dismantled the Zero, including all armaments, the engine, the rear fuselage and instruments. Those parts of the Zero were later manhandled to the coast and then shipped to Darwin for further inspections (Piper 1995, 60). Around 1983, the team leader – Sergeant Allan Beatty – described his 'finding the empty oil tank of the fighter with a single hole and some metal about the size of a .303 bullet inside', which might be the cause of the Zero's malfunction and wrecking (NAA 1942). Beatty kept 'the small drogue from the pilot's parachute' from the site as a souvenir until 1993, the year in which he donated it to the Darwin Aviation Museum (Piper 1995, 63).



Figure 1. Toyoshima's Zero, force-landed on 27 February 1942 (Photograph: Australian War Memorial).

REDISCOVERY OF THE ZERO

In September 1960, during the development of a road on Melville Island, the Zero was rediscovered. The director of the Welfare Branch, Northern Territory Administration, Harry Christian Giese, recognised the Zero as the first Japanese aircraft shot down on Australian soil and advised that it be secured for future usage in a museum or similar facility. Eventually, the Zero was stored in a secure area at Snake Bay, Melville Island (NAA 1971). From 1962 to 1969, the Returned Sailor's, Soldier's and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) Darwin Sub Branch and the RAAA Northern Territory branch showed their interest in obtaining Toyoshima's Zero to the Administrator of the Northern Territory. The Tiwi people, however, refused to provide the wreckage (NAA 1971).

In late October 1977, after lengthy negotiations, the Milikapiti (Tiwi) Council agreed to lend the Zero to AHSNT under a formal agreement. The remaining aircraft parts were shipped to Darwin and secured in an AHSNT facility (Piper 1983).

THE CURRENT CONDITION OF THE ZERO

During the field survey for this research on 3 December 2021, 1,401 images of Toyoshima's Zero were taken with a Nikon D5600 digital single-lens reflex camera (DSLR) at Darwin Aviation Museum. All images were successfully aligned with Agisoft Metashape, and a high-quality 3D scanned model of the remains of Toyoshima's Zero was created. Further, the 3D model of the Zero

with one-metre scale bars was rendered with the 3D software Blender for analysis and display purposes (see Figure 2). The round-shaped oil tank in front of the fuselage is a characteristic of an early model of Zero, such as Model 11 or 21 (Hara 2001, 169). Furthermore, the wingtip from the port wing displayed in the Darwin Aviation Museum shows folding and locking mechanisms. Assuming the wingtip belongs to the front fuselage of the same Zero, it indicates either a Model 21 or 22 (Hara 2001, 277). Therefore, the Zero in the museum is likely identified as a Model 21 Zero.

The remaining parts of the engine mount on the Zero are physical evidence of the salvage operation by the RAAF salvage team at the end of February 1942. Other missing characteristics of this wreckage, such as the engine, the rear fuselage and instruments, match with information from the RAAF salvage team's report. Thus, this Zero can be identified as Toyoshima's Zero.

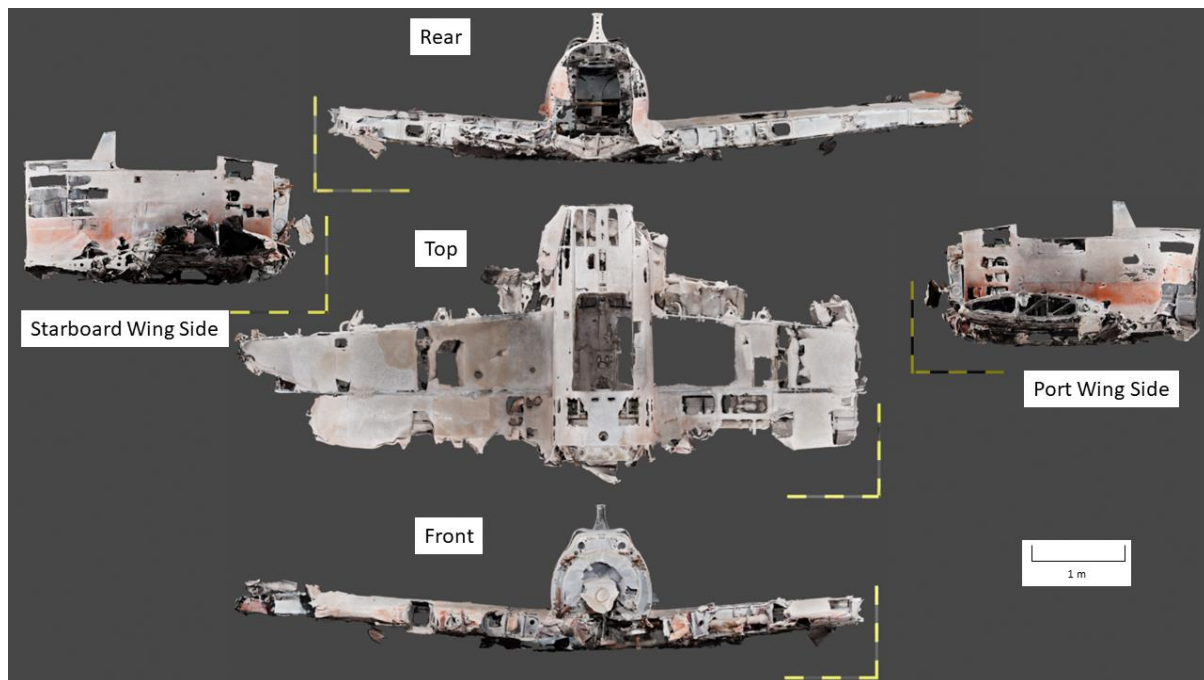


Figure 2. 3D-rendered orthographic view of the Zero (Created by the author, November 2022).

TOYOSHIMA'S PISTOL

Although Matthias Ulungura described Toyoshima's pistol as a 'revolver', Piper (1995, 58) and Alford (1991, 20–21) describe Toyoshima's pistol as a .32 Belgian automatic pistol with seven rounds fully loaded in its magazine. This description of the .32 Belgian automatic pistol probably comes from Australian Army Sergeant Lew Powell's testimony. Since Powell was military personnel, it is unlikely that he misidentified the calibre and characteristics of the pistol, while he would not have gained any benefits from a false description. It is easy to identify the model of Toyoshima's pistol as the FN Model 1910 based on Powell's specific description (Gorenstein 2022, Chapter 10).

A Japanese Type 14 pistol, however, is displayed as Toyoshima's at the Darwin Military Museum. This pistol is not likely to come from Toyoshima. The manufacturing year and month for a Type 14 pistol were engraved near its grip. In the case of the pistol in the Darwin Military Museum, the manufacturing year and month can be read as '昭18.4', which means 'April 1943' (Shōwa 18) (see Figure 3), and it is more than a year after the capture of Toyoshima. There is a record that a Mitsubishi Ki-46 Type 100 Command Reconnaissance Aircraft – the Allied codename Dinah – flown by IJA Lieutenants Saburo Shinohara and Hideo Ura crashed north of the Bathurst Island Mission on 17 August 1943. Their bodies were buried near the crash site (Lewis and Claringbould 2020, 112). The pistol currently exhibited as Toyoshima's at the Darwin Military Museum likely belongs to either Shinohara or Ura.

Toyoshima's pistol often appears in many stories and museums, such as the statue of Matthias, because it is the direct physical evidence of his surrender. Since Toyoshima is the first Japanese POW captured on Australian soil, the identity of who disarmed him later became a historical matter, and his pistol symbolised the event. Since the social value of the event increased over time, Powell attempted to reclaim the credit for the disarming of Toyoshima much after the war (Bellamy 1995, 63).



Figure 3. A close-up of the Type 14 pistol, which is exhibited at the Darwin Military Museum as Toyoshima's pistol (Photograph: Author, 4 December 2021).

STATUE OF MATTHIAS ULLUNGURA AND PROPELLER ON BATHURST ISLAND

As a plaque on the statue of Matthias Ullungura in Patakijiyali Museum indicates, the Northern Territory Government built this statue in 2016 to commemorate the contributions of Matthias and the Tiwi people during WWII (Figure 4). Despite Matthias mentioning Toyoshima's pistol as a 'revolver', his statue holds an FN Model 1910 pistol which Lew Powell's description influenced. It is questionable whether the Tiwi people requested or benefited from this statue, given the oral history and dance they have developed to represent this part of their history (Davidson 2015). It is more likely that the statue is the government's way of indicating interest in the Tiwi people and the shared past.

Though more research is required, a brief inspection of the picture of the propeller near the Patakijiyali Museum attributed to Toyoshima's Zero by Ken Lai, a curator of the Darwin Aviation Museum, suggests the association is unlikely for two reasons. First, the propeller reduction gear and the propeller shaft, which appear in the propeller on Bathurst Island, are still visibly intact on the wreckage of Toyoshima's Zero in the historical picture (see Figure 1). The propeller reduction gear of Toyoshima's Zero is still covered with a metal housing and surrounded by the cowlings in the picture. Second, the propeller should be bent backwards, since Toyoshima's Zero force-landed. The propeller on Bathurst Island (Figure 4), however, is bent forwards, indicating the propeller hit ground or water from the side or back but not from the front. It is challenging to identify whether the propeller on Bathurst Island originated from either a Japanese or an Allied plane because Sumitomo Metal

Industries was licenced by American company Hamilton Standard in 1934, and the company started to manufacture hydromatic propellers in 1938 for Zeros (Yoshida 2019, 76–78).



Figure 4. A bronze statue of Matthias Ullungura (left) and a three-blade propeller (right) outside the Patakijiyali Museum (Photograph: Wendy Van Duivenvoorde, 27 May 2021).

SOCIAL VALUE CHANGES

From this research, historical narratives of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials can be observed. The Darwin Aviation Museum uses Toyoshima's Zero as a medium to recreate the 1942 Bombing of Darwin. The Darwin Military Museum pistol and the Patakijiyali Museum propeller are used to lend legitimacy and authenticity to the host institutions. Meanwhile, status of Matthias Ullungura serves as a tourist attraction. These narratives suggest that the social values of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials have also changed over time. Parallels can be observed elsewhere, as in the case of USS *Arizona* in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. During the war, the wreckage of the USS *Arizona* was utilised for war efforts. After the war, the wreckage was heavily salvaged for relic collecting until the time came in the 1960s when the wreck became a war memorial (Delgado 1992).

RE-CREATING THE PAST WITH MEDIUMS

All museums surveyed during this research attempt to re-create the event by utilising Toyoshima's Zero and related materials to some degree. In other words, those materials work as mediums to connect visitors and the past event – the Bombing of Darwin. In the case of the Darwin Aviation Museum, Toyoshima's Zero is a medium to re-create past events. The pistol in the Darwin Military Museum and the propeller at Patakijiyali Museum also serve as a medium through which to provide legitimacy and authenticity to the respective museums, despite the questionable credibility of those artefacts. Further, the creation of related materials, which are fabricated mediums, occurred in the

cases of the Patakijiyali Museum (i.e., the statue of Matthias Ulungura). These cases illustrate how mediums are significant in experiencing a past event and are also used for tourist attractions.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to answer the main research question: Why and how have utilisations of the wreckage of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials changed over time? Four research aims were addressed to answer this research question.

The first aim was to examine historical documents and records of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials. Through analysis of historical documents, value shifts towards Toyoshima's Zero over time were observed. The aircraft had value as an enemy aircraft during the war. After the war, it was forgotten until its rediscovery. After its rediscovery, several stakeholders were interested in obtaining the aircraft as a war relic and tourist attraction.

The second aim was to record and analyse the current condition of the Zero in the Darwin Aviation Museum to observe any trace of utilisations. With the recording and analysis of the Zero in the Darwin Aviation Museum, this study successfully identified the model of the Zero as an early Model 21 flown by Toyoshima; this study also examined traces of salvage attempts.

The third aim was to observe related materials and displays in three museums. With the observation of museum displays, this research found the credibility of artefacts claimed to be Toyoshima's pistol and the propeller from his Zero questionable. Overall, the survey concluded that all three museums attempted to re-create the event by utilising artefacts to some degree and I noted social value changes over time.

The final aim was to interpret collected data to understand human behaviour towards materials related to the war. As explained above, the social value of Toyoshima's Zero and related materials has changed over time. Historical records and the current condition of the Zero reflect these shifts. Moreover, museums utilise Toyoshima's Zero and related materials as mediums to connect visitors with the re-created past event.

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