

Cultural Activities of German POWs at Nagoya Camp (1914–1919) :

Focusing on the Influence of the Army's Policy

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This paper aims to clarify characteristics of the cultural activities of German prisoners of war (POWs) from Qingdao (Tsingtao), China who were held in Japan during World War I, particularly at the Nagoya Camp. German POWs comprised approximately 4,700 German servicemen captured during the war between Japan and Germany. They remained as prisoners and were held in camps across Japan, from October 1914 to January 1920. During this period, Japan was obligated to treat POWs humanely, in accordance with international treaties that prohibited their mistreatment. Thus, the POWs could engage in cultural activities, such as music and theater. However, the Japanese Army's perspectives of these activities and their influence in actual cultural activities remain unknown.

From the records of oral presentations and meetings within the Army, this paper finds that cultural activities by POWs were subject to the army's oversight, and that public performances by POWs were discouraged even when they were about to be liberated. Several musical activities took place outside camps in Nagoya after the Armistice was signed in November 1918, and theatrical performances, including music, were held in 1919. I clarify the characteristics of these performances and point out that cultural activities at the Nagoya camp reflected army policy more strongly than at other internment camps. This indicates that cultural activities by POWs were not contained within the camps but were conducted and oriented under the influence of the host country's military and civilian population.