

The Great Zoo Massacre

As I see it, the relationship between the potential victim and the actual victim cannot be defined in terms of innocence and guilt. There is no question of “expiation.” Rather, society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a “sacrificeable” victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members.

—René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*

Sacrifice fortifies social borders—between kin and non-kin; animal and human; man and God—by its very staging of their threatened collapse.

—Susan L. Mizruchi, *The Science of Sacrifice*

THE CULTURE OF TOTAL SACRIFICE

The most disturbing thing that ever happened at the Ueno Zoo was the systematic slaughter of the garden’s most famous and valuable animals in the summer of 1943. At the height of the Second World War, as the Japanese empire teetered on the brink of collapse, the zoo was transformed from a wonderland of imperial amusement and exotic curiosity into a carefully ritualized abattoir, a public altar for the sanctification of creatures sacrificed in the service of total war and of ultimate surrender to emperor and nation. The cult of military martyrdom is often recognized as a central component of Japanese fascist culture, but events at the zoo add a chilling new dimension to that analysis.¹ They show that the pursuit of total mobilization extended into areas previously unexamined, suggesting how the culture of total war became a culture of total sacrifice after 1943. In staging the collapse of the zoo’s symbolic

society—the figurative disintegration of ecological modernity—Japanese leaders used the spectacular charisma of the garden’s animals and the ritual mechanisms of animal propitiation to promote a cult of martyrdom on the home front meant to encompass the human and the animal worlds alike.

The killings were carried out in secret until nearly one-third of the garden’s cages stood empty, their former inhabitants’ carcasses hauled out of the zoo’s service entrance in covered wheelbarrows during the dark hours before dawn. By early September twenty-seven specimens representing fourteen different species had been killed, most with poison, some by starvation, and a few by strangulation or with bloody hammer blows and sharpened bamboo spears wielded by the same keepers who had nurtured the animals with care just days before. The creatures that were killed included nationally famous animals such as Ali and Katarina, Abyssinian lions sent to Emperor Hirohito from the emperor of Ethiopia; Hakkō, the leopard mascot famously captured by Japanese troops during the invasion of Manchuria; and, most memorably and most tragically, John, Tonky and Wanri, performing elephants known to children throughout the empire thanks to starring roles in school textbooks, children’s stories, and magazine feature articles.²

The slaughter was a cruel process made particularly sickening by the sense of betrayal that permeated each step. When keepers arrived with piles of poisoned raw meat and fresh vegetables rarely seen during the lean war years, many of the creatures dived in with gusto; ursine species grunted with satisfaction as they ate horsemeat laced with massive doses of strychnine; big cats purred with relish as they tore into lethal cuts of meat. Only the elephants, intelligent and sensitive to human emotional cues, demurred entirely, perhaps responding to the misgivings of their trainers, perhaps repelled by the strychnine that oozed from the fresh potatoes and carrots used to tempt them. When animals took the bait, their caretakers watched in horror as hungry satisfaction turned to panic; many of the men turned away in revulsion as the chemical agents triggered an escalating series of muscle spasms that usually culminated in cardiac arrest. Strychnine works slowly and has no anesthetic or sedative properties. It was, as one keeper put it, “a terrible, pathetic way to die.”³

Orders from the highest echelon of the Tokyo government said that rifles, kept at hand for use in cases of escape, were not to be used in the killings. Public disorder was the paramount concern, and anxiety about

secrecy took precedence over animal suffering. Strychnine was brutal but quiet; rifle shots were impossible to conceal given the zoo's proximity to a densely populated neighborhood.

The men who carried out the killings felt betrayed themselves. Most of the zoo's professional staff did not agree with the orders dictating how the slaughter was to be carried out. In a dynamic that belies facile assertions of an easy match between official wartime doctrine and actual social practice, employees showed remarkable creativity as they resisted harming the animals at all. Citing (and sometimes manufacturing) plans for food substitution, animal evacuation, and emergency euthanasia, the zoo's staff, led by interim zoo director Fukuda Saburō, urged a reasoned approach to the problems of zoo keeping during wartime rather than the zealous pursuit of "holy war." If limited feed was an issue, guidelines called for the investigation of food substitutes before euthanizing irreplaceable animals. If escape during bombardment was a concern, arrangements could be made to evacuate the animals to rural holding pens or regional zoos, which were eager to show the high-profile animals kept in Tokyo. And finally, if bombing was imminent or cages were in fact damaged in a raid, zoo staff was trained in the use of Winchester rifles. Training exercises showed, Fukuda claimed, that the most dangerous animals could be dispatched in the time between the first air-raid siren and the likely arrival of aircraft overhead. Seen in this light, the entire episode provides a microhistory of fascism's contested emergence during the war, showing how the discourse of martyrdom for the nation—as a particular kind of death—moved to center stage at the zoological gardens and in the broader culture.

There was, Fukuda and others asserted in a variety of letters and memos, no need to carry out most of the executions as ordered, and staff sought at each step to stall, divert, or simply stop the killings. These acts of resistance were met with rebuttals from the office of the capital's governor general or his parks commissioner, Inoshita Kiyoshi. Indeed, this entire bizarre episode of animal slaughter, what I have chosen to call the "Great Zoo Massacre" following Robert Darnton's rich analysis of the "Great Cat Massacre of Rue Saint Severin" in eighteenth-century Paris, was orchestrated by a man with little knowledge of the zoo's day-to-day administration, Ōdachi Shigeo (1892–1955), the imperially appointed governor general of Tokyo. Ōdachi followed up the secret killings with a spectacular public pageant reframing the deaths as acts of martyrdom in the service of the nation. One of the most power-

ful and influential men in the Japanese empire, Ōdachi became home minister slightly more than a year after ordering the massacre.⁴

That the animals would be killed when food was scarce or in anticipation of Allied bombs that might lead to escapes was not surprising. Similar killings had recently taken place in London and Berlin, and the zoo's staff knew of them.⁵ Just as in those cases, food was short and loss of control over the animals was a possibility in the event of an air raid. In consultation with Director Koga Tadamichi and Commissioner Inoshita, Fukuda and his staff developed elaborate plans to answer these and related questions. These plans and the deteriorating war situation explain the timing of the events; the war had entered a "critical phase" in 1943—*jikyoku* in the parlance of the time—and the animals could not be kept as they always had been. The plans are less helpful, however, in explaining the peculiar details of the massacre. That someone of Ōdachi's importance—one of the empire's most important technocrats, the man most directly responsible for managing the imperial capital—would take such an active role in the public *staging* of the slaughter is something of a riddle. He could have ordered the killing with the stroke of a pen.⁶

At first blush, the killing of creatures captured from the wild or carefully bred in captivity and selected for exhibition due to their ecological, scientific, cultural, or political value seems to run entirely counter to the mission of the zoo, and Ōdachi's participation only exacerbates one's sense of confusion. Why did someone of Ōdachi's stature get involved in such questions so soon after his promotion to Governor General of Tokyo, a new position created by the Home Ministry to rationalize control over the imperial capital at a critical moment? As the empire threatened to shatter, why would Ōdachi, a man who had also been special mayor (*tokubetsu shichō*) of occupied Singapore—the top civilian administrator—and who knew more than nearly anyone about the state of affairs at the edge of empire, concern himself with such an ostensibly marginal matter?⁷

It is a moment much like the one that inspired Darnton's exploration of artisanal culture under the *ancien régime* in France. Darnton's investigation started with a singularly unfunny joke, the riotous slaughter of a shop master's cat by workers in Paris and its subsequent parody in mocking puns and performances. "Where is the humor," Darnton asks, "in a group of grown men bleating like goats and banging with their tools while an adolescent reenacts the ritual slaughter of a defenseless animal? Our own inability to get the joke is an indication of the distance



FIGURE 12. Tokyo governor general Ōdachi Shigeo and members of the Youth Society for Buddhist Tradition (Shidō Bukkyō Seinen Dentō Kai) leading the procession to the Memorial Service for Animal Martyrs on September 4, 1943. Crowds of youngsters from the surrounding neighborhood can be seen following the procession. The Elephant House stands in the background of this image, shrouded in red-and-white curtains, or *kōhaku*, sometimes used to mark ceremonial space. Courtesy of Tokyo Zoological Park Society.

that separates us from the workers of pre-industrial Europe.” That recognition of distance can provide a starting point for fruitful investigation. “When you realize that you are not getting something—a joke, a proverb, a ceremony” that is particularly meaningful to those on the ground at the time, he finishes, “you can see where to grasp a foreign system of meaning in order to unravel it. By getting the joke of the great cat massacre, it may be possible to ‘get’ a basic ingredient of artisan culture under the Old Regime.”⁸ Similarly, by decoding another puzzling ceremonial slaughter—the massacre of a number of well-known and valuable animals at Tokyo’s Ueno Imperial Zoological Gardens in 1943—we may grasp some of the central dynamics of life on the Japanese home front in the context of imperial collapse.

For many of those living in Tokyo at the time, Ōdachi’s involvement was just as puzzling in 1943 as it is today. This makes it all the more intriguing for historians. Even in the midst of total war, it was a mo-

ment marked by an appalling rupture of the imperial quotidian, the shocking irruption of the bloody war and its irrational sacrifices into a landscape of leisure, curiosity, and conquest, one of the few places that might have seemed insulated from the real-world complexities and costs of imperial life, a retreat where one could still imagine taking one's children for a day of fun and distraction. This sense of disruption and change appears to have been the intention of Ōdachi's involvement. The war entered a new and particularly lethal phase in 1943. Henceforth there could be no haven from the demands of the conflict, no private life exempt from the needs of the nation, and no escape from mobilization, no matter how temporary or seemingly inconsequential.⁹

A STRANGE SORT OF CEREMONY

Only when all of the killings were completed were they made public, and then in a carefully choreographed religious pageant. The centerpiece of the governor general's involvement was an elaborate memorial service staged on the grounds of the zoo on September 4, 1943. On that day, as afternoon temperatures climbed into the mid-eighties and newspapers celebrated Japan's war against the Allies, hundreds of officials and spectators followed Governor General Ōdachi and a group of formally costumed Buddhist monks, led by Ōmori Tadashi, chief abbot of Asakusa's Sensōji Temple, out of the tree-lined central promenade of Ueno Park, under the gates of the zoo, and down into the gardens. The solemn parade wound through the eerily hushed grounds past empty cages. As they walked, officials found themselves shadowed by a second, less organized sort of pageant; dozens of children from the surrounding neighborhood had heard that something unusual was happening in the zoo. Typically curious and eager for news of their favorite animals or strange goings on, the children had snuck in by a variety of routes known to those who grew up in Nezu, the neighborhood of narrow streets and tightly packed houses that bordered the zoo to the east. After a few short moments, the processions arrived at their destination: a large white tent hung with banners announcing the "Memorial Service for Martyred Animals."¹⁰

Abbot Ōmori and his monks entered the tent first, heads bowed as they shuffled past lines of chairs to the dais at the front of the large enclosure. They were followed by Ōdachi and then, after a short but meaningful distance, by Prince Takatsukasa Nobusuke (1889–1959), chair of the Japanese Association of Zoological Gardens and Aquariums and father-in-law to the Shōwa Emperor's daughter. Like the Shōwa

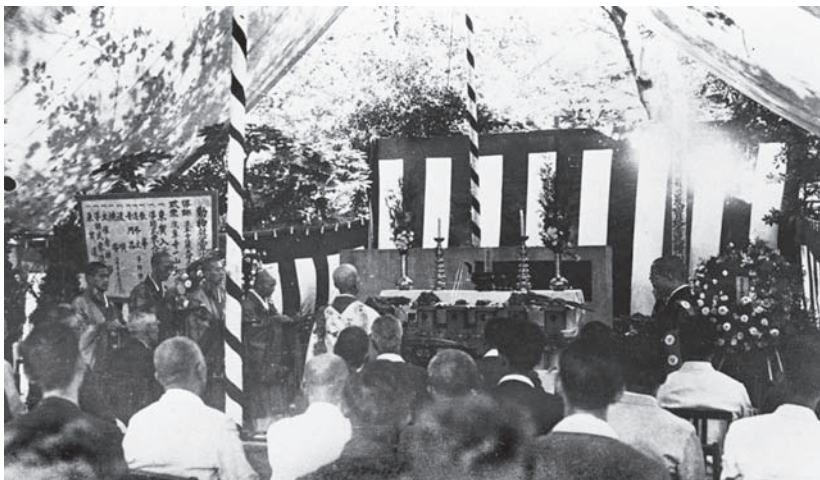


FIGURE 13. Abbot Ōmori Tadashi leads the Memorial Service for Animal Martyrs at Ueno Zoo. Certain of the animals were eventually buried under the ground occupied by Ōmori, who kneels facing a cenotaph dedicated to the spirits of dead animals. It is worth pausing to consider this image in its immediate context. At a time when thousands of soldiers and civilians were dying each day in the war overseas, hundreds of officials and select members of the public were asked to break with routine and visit the zoological garden for an animal memorial service sponsored by one of the capital's most powerful civilian administrators. Image courtesy of Tokyo Zoological Park Society.

Emperor himself, Takatsukasa was part of a long tradition of aristocratic naturalists and outdoorsmen. He became particularly well known in the prewar years for his ornithological surveys, even garnering the nickname “Bird Prince” (*Kotori no kōshaku*).¹¹ He served in the House of Peers before moving on in 1944 to become the chief priest of Tokyo's Meiji Shrine, the complex of beautiful buildings built to honor Japan's first modern monarch.

Many of the fine details of the ceremony are lost, destroyed in the chaos of the war years, but we do know that it included some five hundred formal participants, including dozens of municipal and national politicians and elite bureaucrats, as well as an array of imperial military officers and representatives of the Kenpeitai, the Japanese military police. Behind these men came a carefully selected collection of Tokyo residents perhaps believed to represent the ceremony's intended audience: women and children on the home front who had become the garden's primary clientele in the years since the beginning of the war with China in 1937. This group included representatives from the recently formed Greater Japan Women's Association (Dai Nihon Fu-

jinkai), young women from the capital's women's colleges, and a selection of boys and girls from the Tokyo school system.¹²

Once inside the tent, the group was welcomed by Abbot Ōmori and asked to sit quietly as the monks began to intone a sutra in memory of zoo animals "sacrificed to the critical war situation" (*jikyoku sutemi dōbutsu*). As the monks solemnly read the sutra and dozens of news reporters took notes, one person after another moved forward to offer incense and bow before a funerary tablet inscribed with the words "animal martyrs" (*jun'nan mōjū*), an appellation that drew on language long used to sanctify human sacrifice in the service of war. Resonant and respectful, the term *jun'nan*, or martyr, was ubiquitous in a war-time discourse centered on a cult of sacrifice for the sake of nation, emperor, and family. The same term is used by many Japanese Christians to describe Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Before the war's frenzied final phase, however, such "martyrdom" tended to be reserved for the sacrifice of soldiers on the front.

Governor General Ōdachi and Prince Takatsukasa were the first to approach the dais. They were followed by an array of officials beginning with the deputy governor general and ending with the school principals from throughout the city. Next came Aoyama Hiroko and Hanasawa Miyako, teenagers in their first year at Takedai Girls' Higher School, equivalent to boys' middle school. When the young women finished making their offerings and bowing their heads before the memorial, a pair of younger children, Satō Sadanobu and Waki Takako, came forward. Sixth-graders at the Shinobugaoka National Elementary School in Tokyo, Satō and Waki recited quick words of mourning and made their offerings with heads bowed. The Office of the Governor General made certain that news reporters had the correct information for each of the participants: their names, schools, and ages.

An article published in the nation's largest daily the morning after the ceremony described the scene:

A young boy and a young girl stood with their hands clasped and heads bowed before a small mortuary tablet of unfinished wood inscribed with the words "Animal Martyr Mortuary Tablet" (*jun'nan mōjū reii*). A memorial service for zoo animals martyred for our nation took place at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of September 4 at the Ueno Zoological Gardens. The service was held in front of the Memorial for Deceased Animals located between the Elephant House and the Nilgai Enclosure. Written in ink at the entrance: "Memorial Service for Animal Martyrs." Incense floated through the air before a new stupa, light flickered across an altar surrounded by mountains of the animals' favorite raw meats and sardines, carrots, and fruits. Bouquets of

flowers were even personally laid before the altar by Governor General Ōdachi and Prince Takatsukasa Nobusuke, Chairman of the Japanese Association of Zoological Gardens and Aquariums.¹³

Parks Commissioner Inoshita, the article relates, brought the formal ceremony to a close, ending his remarks with this caution: “We want people to give serious thought to the dire circumstances that demand these extraordinary measures.” The article finishes with a melancholy flourish. The formal service may have been over, “but smoke from new incense continued to rise for many hours, put there by the small hands of neighborhood children who heard rumors of the funeral and crowded in one after another, anxious to say good-bye to the lions and tigers they had loved so long and known so well.”¹⁴

The killings took place in secret to preserve the impact of this public event and to prevent any spontaneous expressions of dissent. The representation of the deaths, rather than their actuality, mattered most to Ōdachi. This carefully choreographed spectacle appears to have been addressed to two audiences. The first and most obvious audience was the millions of Tokyoites and others who read about and visited the zoo each year and identified with its famous animal inmates. The second included elite bureaucrats, politicians, military leadership, and technocrats in the Home Ministry. In each case, it was Inoshita’s appeal that people “give serious thought to the dire circumstances” of the war that best expressed the governor general’s intended message.¹⁵ Such a statement implied (but was carefully phrased so as not to directly assert) a change in the course of the war and asked people to consider what such a change might mean.

Ōdachi used the zoo killings—and the intervening media of the animals themselves—as a way to address one of the great taboos of official speech in Japan at the time: defeat. When the governor general and his subordinates such as Inoshita referenced the “critical war situation” (*ji-kyoku*), they were in effect asking people to look down a road toward possible defeat and even greater personal sacrifice. The public spectacle of men, women, and children processing into the zoo to mourn “animal martyrs” that had to be sacrificed because of the deteriorating war situation was the beginning of the governor general’s campaign to shift the terms of public discourse and inure the people of Tokyo to the demands of a failing empire. It might also be seen as a small but important step toward the tragic mass suicides and hopeless unarmed charges that brought the war to a gory crescendo in 1945.

Prior to being posted in Tokyo in 1943, Ōdachi served as governor general of occupied Singapore, and in that capacity he watched the Japanese empire expand and then, with terrifying speed, begin to contract as the weight of American industrial power swung behind the war effort. Already by 1942 the Japanese Navy had suffered its first defeats at the Coral Sea and Midway, and Ōdachi, as the man ultimately responsible for mobilizing the capital's population to resist an invasion, was looking for a way to cut through the white noise of official propaganda. The anonymous mass death and brutal hardships of the frontlines would soon be visited upon the capital's populace, he believed, and the triumphalist narratives of Japanese victory that filled newspapers and official pronouncements had allowed some to grow woefully out of touch with the real war situation.¹⁶ Similarly, and perhaps even more importantly to a technocrat like Ōdachi, certain policy decisions in the capital were being made based on the official narrative of continued conquest. In the wake of the strategically insignificant but symbolically humiliating Doolittle Raid of April 1942, the Imperial Army had promised that "not a single enemy plane" would ever again darken Tokyo's skies. Such assertions continued into 1943, even as the empire began its cascade. To prepare for bombardment was to put the lie to the military's pledge, and Ōdachi moved carefully as he began the process.

The governor general was dealing with powerful political forces when he ordered the sacrifices. Even for someone of his stature, the question of defeat was not easily broached in public discussion. In private, people had been talking of such things freely for years by 1943, but the boundaries of permissible public speech were still carefully policed, and he was a civilian administrator dealing with military questions.¹⁷ As often happens with the mythology of war in times of military failure, by 1943 a significant gap had developed between the realities of Japan's war situation and the orthodox image of the conflict recognized in the state-monitored public media. Ōdachi apparently saw the sacrifice of zoo animals as a way to bridge this gap without provoking censure from those who monitored the acceptable frontiers of expression.¹⁸

By addressing the issue via the zoo animals, Ōdachi gained a large audience and avoided interference from the military or others in the government. The zoo massacre could be framed as a simple act of expediency rather than a major policy decision. And the actual killings were easily justified to anyone who might question Ōdachi's motives. As Fukuda argued when visited by concerned police officials and members of the military police in the closing days of August, at a time when many

human beings could not secure enough calories to sustain themselves it was increasingly difficult to justify keeping large carnivorous animals in the zoo. And furthermore, the killings could be said to have been carried out in order to keep public order. Citing the zoo's emergency plans, Ōdachi suggested that killing the animals was prudent given the chaos that would erupt in the event of a cage breach. "A single bomb might kill dozens or even hundreds of people," he is quoted as saying, "but human beings instinctually fear a single tiger far more than any bomb."¹⁹ As for Ōdachi's particular flourish, he made certain that the public memorial service was recorded and broadcast via the mass media. It was painted as an act of compassion aimed at children. Who would deny Tokyo's children the opportunity to mourn the poor animals they had "loved so long and known so well"?²⁰

This public ritual was an early rip in the fraying fabric of wartime official culture, a culture that would, within two short years, call upon all imperial subjects to be ready to sacrifice themselves and their families in a Manichean struggle against the overwhelming power of the American military. In 1943 the ethos of total sacrifice was just moving to center stage, the ethos that would lead hundreds of young men to fly stripped-down aircraft into American warships and inspire women and children to begin training with bamboo spears in the hopes of holding off heavily armed Allied soldiers.²¹ This ideal of absolute self-surrender to the emperor and the nation—the dark heart of what postwar Japanese scholars have labeled the "emperor system"—had long been present in Japanese discourse. It was the *scope* and *subject* of Japan's wartime cult of martyrdom that were changing in 1943. By the summer of 1945 official culture would celebrate the conviction of mothers to offer their lives and those of their children for the country, a merciless echo of the massacre of these "animal martyrs." In the early years of the war such status was generally reserved for soldiers at the front. The Great Zoo Massacre, then, is also a potent reminder of the necessity of treating warfare as an evolving—and contingent—process rather than a single, coherent event.

Ōdachi's policy choices indicate that he was concerned first and foremost with public order in the capital. His second concern seems to have been to prepare the people of Tokyo for possible violent resistance in the event of invasion rather than warning them in the hopes of saving lives. He was charged with preparing the city for bombardment, and this was one rather small—though perhaps uniquely telling—aspect of those preparations. No longer would the cult of martyrs be limited to

soldiers on the frontlines. As the empire collapsed, so did the humanizing logic of ecological modernity. Families on the home front were now called upon to prepare themselves for acts of bodily heroism and martial sacrifice. In 1943 what had long been a question for soldiers *elsewhere* in the empire, whose sublimated sacrifice was mourned by those at home, was in the process of becoming an issue for men, women, and children *at home* in Japan. The entire nation—with the crucial exception of the emperor himself—would now be called upon to play the role of martyr.²² And indeed, in the full expression of this logic the whole nation might theoretically be sacrificed to preserve the exceptional status of the emperor.

As was shown in the previous chapter, eulogizing soldiers' hard lives and valiant sacrifice had long provided the central focus for a wartime ideology aimed at spurring productivity and discipline on the home front; bringing the practices (rather than the ideal) of heroic self-destruction into the households of the imperial capital was something new. With the fall of the Japanese-occupied Aleutian island of Attu in 1943, in which a contingent of twenty-five hundred soldiers sacrificed their lives rather than surrender, the term *gyokusai*, literally the “shattering of the jewel,” or the sort of death-before-dishonor suicide missions that American GIs branded “banzai charges,” had begun to appear in Japanese newspapers. What remained uncertain in the summer of 1943 was whether or not such behavioral exemplars should be incorporated into efforts to mobilize civilian society for similar sacrifices rather than in support of the troops. There was no predetermined descent into the lethal final months of the war. Without taking an explicit public stance on this question at the time of the sacrifice, Ōdachi made it clear that he believed those on the home front had to be prepared for the next phase of the conflict, and the zoo massacre was one of the first public steps in this campaign.²³

The dramatic news of a slaughter at the zoological gardens would carry this message to the metropolitan audience in a way that was not possible in stories about human combat casualties on distant battlefields. Director Koga, who took leave from the zoological garden in July 1941 in order to join the faculty of the Army Veterinary College, recalled after the war how he had learned of the massacre and how Ōdachi intended to use it:

I was called to the office of the Parks Commissioner [Inoshita Kiyoshi], and I rushed there together with Fukuda Saburō, my replacement during the war. When we arrived we were informed that the Governor General had decided

that the zoo's big animals had to be put down. I said to myself, "Ah, the moment has finally come." It seems that there was quite a debate over taking things this far at the highest levels of the municipal government, and there was nothing we could do but bow our heads to the decision. I heard that the decision was made because many people believed we were still winning the war. But Governor General Ōdachi was the mayor of Occupied Singapore, or Shōnan as we called it then, before coming to Tokyo, and he knew the real situation. He disapproved mightily of the way people on the home front were behaving. When he became Governor General he was determined to wake the people up to the fact that war is not so sweet a thing. So Ōdachi chose to use the zoo's animals rather than simple words as a way to chastise the people. Some argued that herbivores such as the elephants could be evacuated to the countryside, where they would survive on grass and plants, but Ōdachi stubbornly refused to allow it because his real concern was not the animals at all.²⁴

But of course Ōdachi *was* concerned with the animals, just not the way Koga might have hoped. Ōdachi seems to have understood that the killing of the zoo's animals, which were uniquely popular and nearly universally liked, offered a means of cutting through the chorus of official blandishments. It would draw on deep emotional affiliations in a way that a more human story could not, especially after so many years of mass human casualties. This point is crucial: it was not so much the killings that mattered for Ōdachi but rather their public ritual celebration.

MASS-MEDIATED SACRIFICE

Perhaps the most productive way to think about the events at the zoo that summer is to consider them as a distinctly modern form of animal sacrifice. It is an odd idea, and the Japanese terms for sacrifice, *kugi*, or *kyōgi*, were not used in wartime descriptions of the massacre. Much like cannibalism, *kugi* was beyond the pale in imperial Japan, a marker of the darkest sort of primitive behavior associated with those either far away in time or lurking in the "uncivilized" corners of the empire.²⁵ Folklorists such as Yanagita Kunio argued that Japanese had sacrificed animals in ancient days or distant places, but in the contemporary moment sacrifice was attributed to the "barbarian" peoples of the imperial periphery. When *kugi* and its synonyms did appear in literature, it was often in the pulp fiction of empire that offered readers tantalizing glimpses of primitive rites still performed in the jungles of Southeast Asia and the like, areas beyond the reach of Japanese civilization and populated by people said to have evolved little beyond the brute culture of the animals being sacrificed.

And yet, Ōdachi's overriding interest in the animals to be killed was their symbolic value as sacrificial victims. As Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss argue in their classic study on sacrifice, the success of a sacrificial ceremony hinges on the socially recognized value of the victim. The victim must be of a special status; it must stand apart from its surroundings by virtue of some defining characteristic or characteristics.²⁶ A proper sacrificial victim is particularly precious in symbolic terms, and the impact of the sacrificial rite—in the case of the zoo, the Buddhist rituals carried out by Abbot Ōmori and their subsequent rehearsals in the popular media, not the killings themselves—increases in direct proportion to the symbolic value attached to the object sacrificed. The zoological garden provided a stock of animals already endowed with the extraordinary surplus value necessary to a successful sacrifice in the context of an industrialized mass society. The economy of the zoological garden is premised on the notion that the animals held in its cages are distinctly (and sometimes uniquely) valuable, and few institutions spoke to such a wide audience in 1943, when the Ueno Zoo was in all likelihood the most popular zoo in the world.

The zoological garden provided Ōdachi with a powerful amplifier through which to broadcast this message. The flood of new animals that followed Japan's military expansion brought zoo attendance to new heights. Official gate numbers peaked at 3,270,810 in 1942, the same year that the tide of Japan's imperial expansion crested. Attendance in early 1943, prior to and immediately following the sacrifice, was similarly impressive. Well over two million people visited the gardens that year even as the conflict entered a new and particularly brutal stage. Attendance plummeted, however, in the two years following the killings as the tolls of war soared. Just over half a million people visited the zoo in 1944, and in 1945 attendance hit a twenty-two-year low, with only 290,000 visitors, less than a thousand per day on average.²⁷

The sacrifice came during the heyday of the Ueno Zoo, a time that Director Koga would later recall as a "golden age," when the institution was flooded with hoards of visitors and so many new specimens that it had run out of exhibition space. Largely detached from the realities of naval defeats and attenuated lines of supply, the overpopulated zoo remained a center for celebration until the memorial service itself. Press coverage was always strong at the zoo because, among its other attractions, the institution delivered information in prepackaged narratives that fit neatly into newspaper columns, replete with eye-catching images. The place was a news magnet. Patrons and reporters alike went

there to escape from the oppressive realities of the war, and the killing of such charismatic captives—many of them icons of imperial acquisition—furnished the kind of sensational event that was certain to garner attention. Press coverage was carefully coordinated by the Office of the Governor General, which offered reporters a surprise press release on September 2 announcing that certain of the animals in the collection had been “put down” for fear that they might escape during possible bombings. Many papers ran the short announcement verbatim on September 3. The following ran in the *Mainichi News* that day:

Given the critical state of the war, the city of Tokyo has decided to prepare for the worst by ordering that the most dangerous animals kept in the collection of the Ueno Zoological Gardens be put down. A memorial service conducted by Chief Abbot Ōmori Tadashi of the Asakusa Temple will be held at the zoo at 2 P.M. on the 4th in front of the Deceased Animal Monument. Because even the tamest animals can become frenzied in violent bombings, every large animal from the lions on down must be put down. We ask for understanding on the part of the people of Tokyo who have loved these animals for so long.²⁸

Over five hundred formal invitations were printed on fine paper (something of a rarity during the war) and sent to the homes of officials that same day. Similar invitations were delivered to the offices of the city’s major media outlets.

The Office of the Governor General took care in managing the event because the slaughter of popular animals held in the empire’s premier zoological garden was an act fraught with ambivalence. Like all acts of sacrifice, it was at once an act of sanctification and “a crime, a kind of sacrilege.”²⁹ This is the fundamental contradiction of the sacrificial act; it assumes two opposing aspects, appearing, as the anthropologist René Girard suggests, at times as a sacred rite and at other times as a sort of criminal activity, an appalling act of violence.³⁰ Abbot Ōmori offered a series of rites intended to negotiate this contradiction carefully, channeling the violent emotions released by the slaughter. As with other sacrifices in other contexts, the zoo massacre “released an ambiguous force—or rather a blind one, terrible by the fact that it was a force. It therefore had to be limited, directed, and tamed.”³¹ Modern priests conducting rites of sacrifice scripted by elite university-educated bureaucrats in the context of one of the twentieth century’s most popular cultural institutions, Ōmori and his monks sought to parlay ancient techniques for dealing with death into the service of the total war.

The evident innocence and massive charisma of the animals themselves impeded such management. The highly anthropomorphized performing elephants Tonky and Wanri, to take the most obvious examples, were known to millions of adults and children in midcentury Japan, and Ōmori and the press labored to render their deaths as a self-sacrifice performed for the Japanese people; these endearing trained beasts were recast as innocent victims who gave their lives to protect the very nation that kept them caged. The memorial service offered both participants and the reading public alike a ritual in which the spiritual value embodied in these national pets was consumed in a rite that framed the killings as acts of public protection even as it implied that many more sacrifices were to come, and that the audience itself might soon assume the martyr's role sanctified in the ceremony.

Japan's mass media, and especially newspapers, provided the means by which most people became aware of the sacrifice. Jingoistic and carefully monitored by the Home Ministry and other agencies, the press presented the memorial service as a yet another spectacle of nationalist sacrifice, albeit an exceptional one. Nested alongside dozens of related articles about such things as young pilots saying goodbye to their mothers before heading overseas or the heroic exploits of soldiers as far off as New Guinea, the sacrifice echoed the accelerating tempo and darkening timbre of an empire in decline, adding new dimensions (and new victims) to ongoing efforts at mass mobilization.

The massacre was a compelling story, and it ran in many of Tokyo's major dailies as well as several other periodicals with wide circulation. Rather than extrapolating to broad analysis of the war situation through the news of the massacre or writing stories about the animals themselves, feature reporting on the event nearly always took the form of heartrending tales focused on human children and zookeepers, such as Fukuda Saburō, who assumed the mantle of "Mister Zookeeper" previously inhabited by directors Kurokawa and Koga. Much as it had been for decades, the quality of the relationships between keepers and the animals described by reporters took on a domestic cast, mimicking the dynamics of familial relationships.

With the killings those domestic metaphors assumed a darker hue, turning the murderous actions of the interim zoo director, the avuncular "Mister Zookeeper," into a kind of metaphoric filicide. When Fukuda described his experience of the killings to a reporter in an interview published on September 4, the day of the memorial service, his grief was palpable, and he presented the massacre as a kind of mass infanticide:

We will hopefully be forgiven by the little boys and girls who have loved these animals. It has been twenty-two years since I started working at the Ueno Zoological Gardens. I raised all of the animals that were killed with tender care (*teshio ni kakete kita*). Many of them were born and died right here at the zoo. If they were humans, it would be as though I was the first to put them in diapers. They were truly darling to me. Even though it hasn't been said openly, the animals died to let the people know that bombings are unavoidable.³²

The slippage in Fukuda's words between human children and animal innocents is conspicuous, illustrating the powerful ambiguities that radiate from all aspects of the massacre. It is difficult to imagine a more horrifying metaphor than the slaughter of one's own children, and it speaks to the terrible predicament of the zoo staff, caught between the demands of their professional roles and the emotional realities of working day in and day out with living animals, feeling creatures with lives of their own. The relationships that develop between keepers and their animal charges are often as powerful as those that unite pet owners with their companion animals, a relationship so intimate that nearly three-quarters of American dog owners today consider their pets to be "like a child or part of the family."³³ Similar feelings characterize pet ownership in contemporary Japan, as they have since at least Meiji times, when "pets" (*aigan dōbutsu*) became markers of middle-class status.³⁴

Important differences do emerge, however, in the reporter's depiction of Fukuda's feelings, which include a putative vow of revenge. Fukuda himself conveyed one portion of the official message in the interview, pointing out that the animals died to deliver a point. The reporter suggests a more violent and active reaction, describing Fukuda as a father who has sacrificed his children, and whose grief has taken the form of a vendetta in the service of war.

Fukuda sits at his desk staring blankly out of the window. He must be thinking of the beloved children he has killed with his own hands—cherishing his memories of the animals. "It couldn't be helped, given the war situation," he says as if speaking to himself. But even as he turns to look outside, a fiercely cold determination to win the war flashes in the zoo director's eye.³⁵

In this rendition of the sacrifice, Fukuda, a man who privately risked censure and possibly worse by resisting direct orders from his superiors to kill animals, is made to perform the emotional response solicited by the ritual. The article offers readers his story as a script whose plot line is one of revenge. The sacrifice was meant to offer a lesson communi-

cated through “the zoo’s animals rather than simple words,” to borrow a phrase from Koga’s postwar recollections. The ritual attempted to press the spectacular shock produced by the killings into the service of the state, to manage interpretations of the killings so as to produce a greater degree of dedication to the defense of the nation. They were framed as necessary acts that required vengeance on the part of the nation in whose name they had been carried out. Much of this management took place in press reports on the ritual, which sought to direct the anger and frustration of the deaths away from the zoo’s managers toward a distant enemy. The zoo managers were instead to be pitied for their grief, like the government, which claimed to be acting in the people’s best interest. The “sacrifice of so many animals so beloved to the people of Tokyo,” one reporter claimed, “has caused feelings of unwavering determination for the final battle to boil up in people’s hearts.”³⁶

Reception is the bogey of cultural history, and there is, of course, no way to know precisely how each member of the public interpreted the sacrifice. But the zoo’s rich collection of wartime documents offers some tantalizing clues. The zoological gardens hold a small and surprisingly unedited cache, a rarity perhaps attributable to the seemingly apolitical nature of the institution itself or maybe even active intent on the part of Koga and others. Regardless of the origins of this little documentary treasure, the gardens hold thousands of pages of material from a period that is often an archival lacuna, a happy find for historians concerned with daily life during the war.

Quite literally folded in between the pages of this archive are a series of letters to the zoo director that arrived in the wake of the sacrifice. One of the most striking of these letters, addressed to Fukuda himself, exhibited the desired conversion of grief and shock into anger and determination:

I saw the evening paper last night and I couldn’t believe my eyes. Since I was little the lions, tigers, and elephants of picture books and magazines have called to me. And then one day, my mother took me to the zoo, and there right in front of my eyes, weren’t those the very same lions, tigers, and elephants from the books moving around right in front of me? But then I saw last night’s paper, and I couldn’t bear to look. I feel so sad. I can’t imagine what it is like for those who have cared for the animals for so many decades. Even though it is for the war it is really pitiful. We must destroy the Americans and British who killed these animals. I can’t wait to become a soldier, so that I can avenge these animal martyrs. Perhaps that would satisfy the animals who made me so happy.³⁷



FIGURE 14. “About Military Animals (4): ‘Donkey,’” late 1943. A grim revision of the 1942 map seen in the previous chapter. Water buffalo fill the elephant house (12), wild boar stand in for slaughtered bears (24, 25), and the large animal house (11) is disturbingly blank. The text on the map remains unchanged, urging parents to “Take this ‘guide map’ home with you so may use it to tell your children about military animals and the zoo.” Image Courtesy of Tokyo Zoological Park Society.

The anger expressed in the last three sentences of the letter is striking, and much like the resolve attributed to Fukuda in the *Yomiuri* interview, the jump from grief to martial determination has a manufactured feeling. And yet, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has found in her research on young, well-educated Kamikaze pilots, such statements were hardly unusual in wartime Japan.³⁸ The letter was simply signed “a young patriot” (*shōkokumin*), a generic term used during the war to refer to anyone of high school age or younger.

But reactions to the sacrifice were not as homogenous as officials might have liked. Nor were they as uniform as stock portrayals of inhuman Japanese “ultranationalist” fanaticism would have it. Those who chose to send letters were hardly a brainwashed horde of bloodthirsty emperor worshippers intent on sacrificing themselves at all costs. The letters reveal a deep, sad current of humanity running through wartime culture, a sense of helplessness in the face of grand events that is dou-

bled against the patriotic bromides of the “young patriot” and kindred writings in the press. The call for vengeance against the Americans and British cannot be said to be typical. Just as often, the letters simply professed deep regret or sadness, sharing feelings of loss that extinguished any vengeful motives. “Dear Mr. Zookeeper,” read the uncertain and carefully penned characters of a first-grader writing to the zoo director, “It is so sad that you killed the animals. Up until now I have always loved the zoo. I liked the elephants the most. I liked the tigers, lions, and polar bears, too. But now the animals I like aren’t there anymore. How sad.”³⁹ Such letters tell a very human story of lost innocence and fading hope in the context of dying empire. They imply that hopelessness and grief, in addition to (or perhaps in most cases rather than) burning martial conviction or mindless emperor worship, should be given voice in our attempts to comprehend the Japanese culture of fascist martyrdom, especially as it encompassed the home front in the final years of the war.⁴⁰

The letters were limited neither to children nor to simple prose. An older writer crafted a somber *haiku* dedicated to the “animal martyrs” that illustrates a distinctly Buddhist approach to human–animal dynamics: “When you are reborn, may you return as human, on the autumn breeze.”⁴¹ In these cases, the ritual appears to have been effectual only to the extent that it made the senseless realities of the zoo massacre available to readers as a trigger for mourning, an event that gave emotional structure to the imperial collapse that they witnessed in myriad small happenings around them. For those who took the time to write the zoo director at least, the ceremony was emotionally evocative. It was not, however, sufficient to the task of transforming these emotions into “a feeling of unwavering determination for the final battle” in every case. The ambiguities built into the ceremony allowed for a variety of responses to the Great Zoo Massacre, many of them directly counter to the intended effects of the ritual. As Japan entered the postwar period, the unpropitiated spirits of these slaughtered animals would return to haunt popular memories of the war and its cruelties, allowing for a different kind of mourning and a new kind of forgetting. While the war raged, however, with press controls in place, the ambiguities inherent in the sacrifice—the ambivalence produced by the ritual “drawing together of the sacred and the profane”⁴²—were largely suppressed from public view.

Performed by a Buddhist abbot and witnessed by grade-schoolers and elite politicians alike, the strange act of animal consecration that

was the Great Zoo Massacre was also an act of inversion and dehumanization. It was a ritual mechanism designed to elevate the slaughtered animals as exemplars of righteous death even as it facilitated the reduction of their human counterparts to what philosopher Giorgio Agamben might call “bare life,” or “life exposed to death.” Where the protection and well-being of those on the home front had long been held up as the very reason for the war, the men, women, and children of Tokyo were incrementally reduced to a population of biopoliticized bodies as the conflict deepened, into creatures valued for their brute contributions to the war effort but ultimately expendable.⁴³ This shift could only take place once the killings were made public. In the hidden world of the killing floor, the zoo’s animals remained just that, animals. “Martyrs” in public, they were mere objects in the taxonomically conditioned world of slaughter.

The full historical import of this event only becomes visible when that hidden world is brought into the story. The pageant of martyrdom forced a meaning upon the public that had been concocted by the bureaucratic leadership, yet in the long term that meaning rebounded upon its sponsors, largely because the squalid processes of the killing floor awakened the public imagination in the aftermath of national defeat. Arriving at that fuller account requires that we return once again to the world within the zoo, and the conceptions and commitments that ordered life—and death—behind the walls.

THE TAXONOMY OF A MASSACRE

Much as it had in the formation of the zoological gardens in the nineteenth century, taxonomic knowledge played a critical part in its symbolic destruction in the 1940s. In the summer of 1941, six months before the attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war, a new and particularly unfortunate systematics was developed at Ueno.⁴⁴ Like many other men at the time, Director Koga left his civilian position to rejoin the military in 1941, taking the rank of colonel in the Imperial Army. Four days after Koga’s departure, a directive arrived from the Eastern Command Veterinary Division, within which Koga was an officer, instructing Fukuda and his staff to draw up emergency plans to be used if the zoological garden was bombed or raided. In consultation with Koga, Fukuda developed the *Zoological Garden Emergency Procedures*, a plan for the extermination of the collection in the event of emergency. Forwarded to the Eastern Command on August 11,

the document reclassified the entire collection according to the danger posed by each species in the event of cage break. It was a road map for the slaughter that followed two years later.⁴⁵

The *Procedures* distributed all of the zoo's animals into four classes, or *shu*, the same term used for biological "species" in Japanese coined by Itō Keisuke in the nineteenth century. Here, though, the nomenclature was one of fear and hazard rather than place of origin, physiological affinity, or evolutionary descent. Distinctions were not made between carnivores and other animals in the distribution of species into the new taxa. Class One species, termed "extremely dangerous," included all of the zoo's ursine and large feline specimens, as well as canines such as coyotes, poisonous reptiles, and nonhuman anthropoid primates such as baboons. The class further encompassed elephants, hippopotamuses, bison, and the zoo's sole hyena. Class Two animals, "relatively less dangerous," included a menagerie of wild medium-size mammals such as badgers, raccoons, and foxes. It further included emus, ostriches, and all raptors, in addition to ruminants such as giraffes and various deer species. Eighteen crocodiles and a pair of seals were also ranked in this class. Class Three, or "common domesticates," was comprised of barnyard species such as rabbits, goats, and pigs, as well as geese, pheasants, chickens, and a variety of other fowl. Forty mountain goats, four Bactrian camels, four mules, three donkeys, and several other sizable ungulates rounded out the less threatening category of "general domesticates"—these included most of the "military animals" discussed in the previous chapter. The final class, simply lumped together as "other," was populated by more than six hundred canaries, an aviary of other songbird species, turtles, and an unspecified number of "small animals."

The *Zoological Garden Emergency Procedures* was structured by two interrelated concerns: physical threat and attitudes about wildness. It was further shaped by the assumption that the category of biological species was the appropriate analytical unit for such a document. When they wrote the procedures, Fukuda and the other authors assumed that what held true for the generic species also held true for all members of that class in the gardens. They did not make distinctions based on the behavioral or life history of individual creatures: one elephant was as dangerous as another in the classificatory world laid out in 1941; a cub was as dangerous as an adult. It was a habit of mind and notation that would return to haunt Fukuda and his staff two years later, when the generic categories written into the hastily assembled bureaucratic memo

would provide the governor general with easy justification for the extermination of individual animals that the zoo staff sought to save.

Assumptions about wild animals versus domesticated animals are most evident in the differentiation of “relatively dangerous” animals from “general domesticates,” classifications that draw on the cultural binary of wild and tame rather than any measure of physical strength or threat.⁴⁶ The categorization of the zoo’s raptor population in the “relatively dangerous” category illustrates the point. It is difficult to imagine birds of prey posing as much of a public threat as large mammals such as the herd of water buffalo, donkeys, mules, and camels that were classed as “general domesticates,” and therefore less likely to be put down. One can imagine the pandemonium that would result from a group of water buffalo running amok in the heavily trafficked streets surrounding Ueno Station. The physical threat or public disruption from an uncaged raptor seems rather less pressing than four scared Bactrian camels weighing up to fifteen hundred pounds each.

The “extremely dangerous” animals posed the greatest concern. Risk, value, and human curiosity are closely linked at the zoo, which features carefully buffered encounters with physically imposing creatures and draws on the promise of safety and the thrill of danger to bring in patrons. In 1941 one implication of this taxonomy was inverted. Where danger and human fascination with ferocious creatures had previously ensured that many more threatening animals received greater care, it now sealed their fate, placing them at the top of the list of executions. Recognizing that animals in the first class were also the most significant in the zoo’s collection, the authors were at pains to emphasize to the Eastern Command that the zoological gardens were taking a wide array of extra precautions to guard against the “unlikely event” of an animal escape. Koga and others knew that zoos in Europe had seen escapes, and they installed reinforced concrete barriers at great cost. Steel was used in the latest cage designs, and further efforts were underway to develop the safety procedures. Targeted for extermination in 1943, these animals were not all killed, but the deaths that did occur meant the destruction of nearly all of the zoological garden’s most popular animals.

Zoos throughout the archipelago marketed danger and the threat of escape. They made a spectacle of their emergency escape drills by publicizing “escape days” during which patrons could watch (and sometimes join) staff as they trained in various methods of capture ranging from lassoing deer to netting bear. In some cases, keepers would enter enclo-

tures with animals. Pulling deer and other relatively tame animals to the ground, they tie-down roped them rodeo-style as onlookers cheered. In other instances, human beings would play the part of rogue animals, roaring in mock ferocity at screaming children before being netted and tackled by several of their colleagues. Such festivities often ended with a bang and a burst of smoke as gun-toting keepers fired blank cartridges into one cage or another.

The business of the 1941 document was more serious. The *Procedures* outline a series of escalating measures to be taken in response to air raid warnings, when metropolitan Tokyo was under attack, and when the zoo itself was threatened. At “stage one,” reached when an air raid warning was broadcast, zoo staff were ordered to prepare “extremely dangerous” and “relatively dangerous” animals for execution. All animals were to be placed in their sleeping cells and patrons were to be informed of the heightened status via announcements over the garden’s public address system.⁴⁷ All preparations, like the killings, were to be “carried out so as to avoid shocking the general populace,” a phrase that recurs in institutional documents from this period. The zoo kept loaded rifles on hand for use in case of an escape. Poison, which was judged to be “no less lethal than gunshots,” was the sanctioned means of killing because it was quiet. The report included a rough appendix estimating lethal dosages of hydrocyanic acid and nitric strychnine for each type of animal.⁴⁸ It also provided a budget for the purchase of extra nets and other items to be used to capture animals if an escape occurred but did not demand lethal action.

Stage two measures, which basically amounted to stand-by status, were to be taken when it was confirmed that the Tokyo metropolitan area was under attack. The zoo’s main gates were to be chained, and patrons within the grounds were to be ushered off of the premises or escorted to designated air raid shelters. By this time zoo keepers should have completed preparations for the “disposal” of all Class One and Class Two specimens. If the situation was particularly threatening, employees were to prepare for the extermination of the entire zoo collection, including the horses, mountain goats, and ducks classified as “common domesticates.” Only the canaries, turtles, and doves of Class Four were exempted.

Bombings or other threats such as fire that directly jeopardized the zoological garden triggered “stage three.” Animals were put to death in the order designated in the *Procedures*, beginning with Class One and working through each of the subsequent categories. Deemed the greatest

threat, various species of bear filled the first seven spaces on the list. They were to be followed by the zoo's large cats and canines such as hyena and coyotes. The last spaces in the "extremely dangerous" category were filled by hippos, American Bison, elephants, and three species of primate, including a family of six baboons.

As events unfolded in 1943, the hippos, primates, and bison were not included in the official listing of animals slated for death submitted to Ōdachi's office in late August. Ultimately neither the hippos nor the primates were slaughtered in 1943. Only at the last minute were the American bison put to death, killed in an apparent act of symbolic revenge against a species associated with the enemy. Randolph Hearst donated these animals to Ueno in 1933. They were bludgeoned to death with hammers only three days before the memorial service, the last animals to be killed other than the elephants and a young leopard cub. Rumor at the zoo had it that the head of the first bison to die was handed over to a taxidermist to be mounted trophy style. We know for certain that the creature's skull was kept.

THE KILLING FLOOR

Press portrayals of determination and organized precision notwithstanding, the 1943 killings were a messy, disorganized affair fraught with dissension. Their grim history serves as a reminder of the complexities that enter the historical field when we try to account for the reality that human beings are not the only creatures whose stories matter in historical terms. Elephants and other large mammals are neither fully self-conscious agents in the human sense nor affectless objects.⁴⁹ If we hope to understand events like the Great Zoo Massacre, we must begin to pay closer attention to these historical actors, creatures who influence the course of events both through cognitively and instinctually conditioned action and through the complex emotions that they can induce in people. That rich emotional bonds (as well as dislikes) can develop across species boundaries suggests the necessity of a more delicate methodology. We cannot fully understand the human experience of this resonant cultural event without paying close attention to the role of animals, including recognition of the physical pain and emotional trauma that shaped the actions of people and animals alike. This section and the following one attempt to render such complexities into the stuff of history. Together, they constitute a microhistorical analysis focused on affect and the conditions of possible political action in a time of military emergency.

On August 16, 1943, Koga and Fukuda were called to Park Commissioner Inoshita's office where they were told that the big game (*mōjū*) in the zoo's collection were to be killed under orders of strict secrecy. The killings began the following night. Koga and Fukuda each later recalled that, though saddened, they were not surprised by the decision to kill certain zoo animals. What surprised them were the urgency of the orders and their own lack of agency in the process.

Neither Koga nor Fukuda were opposed to killing animals per se. Zookeepers had started the process of culling animals in response to the war as much as two years before Inoshita gave them the bad news. The first wartime killings took place under Koga's direction before he joined the military and before the emergency procedures were committed to paper. In February 1941 Koga's staff shot several animals deemed "surplus." Even today when the conservation mission of zoological gardens has been strengthened through public scrutiny and binding international conventions, zoos can be lethal places for animals. Before the implementation of such agreements as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1975, species of all kinds were routinely slaughtered as part of the day-to-day work of the zoo.⁵⁰ In the early 1940s, as the zoo was caught at the intersection of plummeting food availability and skyrocketing acquisitions from a swelling empire, the zoo culled a number of animals.

These "surplus" animals were routinely shot after operating hours, and their carcasses were dealt with in a number of ways. Some were rendered into taxidermy specimens. If the slaughtered animal was less charismatic or in poor physical condition, it might have simply been buried in the yard behind the zoo hospital alongside dozens of other specimens. In less common instances, the creatures traveled the well-worn path between the zoological garden and any number of veterinary or biology classrooms. The lack of publicity sets the 1941 killings apart from those in 1943. These animals were killed in a manner that was not designed to put their deaths to public use. They were killed as a matter of course, neither in secret (the gunshots would have been clearly audible to hundreds of nearby families) nor as a part of a staged spectacle. Their deaths received little attention or public comment.

The status of such animals was more akin to those held in less pleasant "total institutions" such as the laboratory or the slaughterhouse, where killing was the norm rather than the exception. Death is a regular part of life in zoological gardens, though it is usually kept sequestered behind the scenes. Patrons may understand that the zoological

garden's animals must die like other living creatures, but they tend to ignore this less seemly side of zoo culture unless it is made explicit by outside critics or the institution itself. This unreflective, almost willful ignorance is reinforced by the zoo-going public's lack of general knowledge. In most cases, our curiosity is ephemeral. For most spectators one Manchurian bear is much the same as another, and indeed each brown-coated bear is in many ways indistinguishable from all of the others regardless of species, sex, or even age once the animal has grown into adolescence and ceases to play on our sympathy for "cute" creatures. In a world of largely anonymous and interchangeable specimens or spectacles, the death of many animals is easy to ignore. Only in the case of such highly charismatic individuals as performing elephants or species such as the panda do individual animal deaths register with the broader public.

Emotion can cut both ways, however. Killing an animal that is compliant and docile is heartrending. Animals that fail to conform to our needs and expectations are quite another matter. As with millions of pets expelled from households in Japan (or the United States, for that matter) each year, zoo animals that misbehave or go so far as to attack their human minders easily slip into categories of being that are not only denied moral consideration but which can seem to demand slaughter. Such was the case with the male Asiatic elephant known as "John." The decision to kill John came during a meeting on August 1, 1943, between Inoshita and Fukuda, approximately two weeks prior to Ōdachi's intervention at the zoo. John had been a problem since 1927, when the tremendous creature injured his trainer during a public performance.⁵¹ For the next four years, until 1931, the zoo's only male elephant was excluded from participation in any performances. In that year, Ishikawa Fukujirō, a brash, confident young animal trainer who had experience in one of Japan's circuses, arrived in Tokyo eager to prove himself. He immediately took to working with John early each morning, usually with supervision from Director Koga or another of the zoo's more experienced keepers.

His attempts were short lived and ended in tragedy. Ishikawa was fatally gored by John three days after he arrived at the zoo, his chest ripped open by the elephant's tusks during a morning training session as Koga looked on in horror. The young man died in a local hospital two hours after the incident, thanking the nurse for her care as he bled internally and struggled to breath with a punctured lung and several fractured ribs.⁵² John, an animal whose colorful image as a friendly

behemoth was ubiquitous in youth-oriented print culture, quickly found his legs shackled in heavy chains. The large, intelligent animal's irritation was evident to zoo visitors. While the female elephants Tonky and Wanri performed in the yard outside, John rattled the thick chain on his legs and swayed back and forth in the dim interior of the garishly decorated Elephant House.

John was a difficult animal, and the zoo was confronted with a decision about what to do with an unmanageable "wild" elephant who had been rendered into a popular storybook character. Public image was at odds with the institutional reality, and zoo administrators sought to resolve this contradiction by using the crisis of the war as an alibi. He was "unmanageable" and therefore dangerous, or so the logic went. In fact, his death might be seen as a kind of revenge killing, only required because he had taken a human life. Where decisions about killing animals later that same August caused a great deal of emotional turmoil among the staff, neither the archival record nor postwar memoirs show much hand wringing over the "man killer's" execution. Fallen from grace and no longer deserving of protection, John could be put down with a clear conscience.⁵³ Fukuda's diary entry on the meeting with Inoshita in which the decision to kill John was made simply states, "Told to shoot male elephant, John."⁵⁴

Since the multiple gunshots required to kill the male elephant would cause a commotion in the areas surrounding the zoo, it was decided that the best method to deal with the giant pachyderm was starvation. The elephant's access to food and water was stopped on August 13, 1943, just three days before orders came down to dispose of the entire class of "extremely dangerous" animals. The tremendous elephant died, chained in place, on August 29, seventeen days after keepers stopped providing sustenance. Within those seventeen days the entire world of the zoo turned upside down. By August 29 twenty-two other animals had been poisoned, strangled, or stabbed to death, and John's more charismatic female companions, Tonky and Wanri, were well on their way to death as well.

Staff from the Veterinary College and various members of the Tokyo University science faculty had been eagerly awaiting the large elephant's death, and they arrived at 11 A.M. the following morning to begin dissecting the tremendous body. Anticipating that the elephant's corpse would be too large to move for the long-awaited dissection, the team had begun bringing the necessary chemicals (to preserve the elephant's hide) and tools to the zoo several days before he collapsed for the last

time (he had fallen and struggled to his feet repeatedly as his strength waned). The dissection took four hours. Professor Ogawa Sansuke of Tokyo University's Brain Research Center led the dissection, taking possession of John's skull and brain, which remain preserved in a large jar in one of the university labs to this day. John's lethal tusks, the larger of which was measured at 57 centimeters, were sawed off and weighed. At least one of the tusks stayed in the zoo's possession until well into the postwar period. After his massive hide was removed and coated in preservatives, John's flesh and bones were hacked into pieces and deposited in a hole dug for the purpose in front of the concrete Monument to Deceased Animals together with remains from other slaughtered animals, the same monument before which Tonky and Wanri once bowed in memorial services for other deceased animals. The hide was delivered to Captain Ujie Kōno, who handled clothing requisitions for the Imperial Army, in the hopes that John's huge skin might be put to use in soldier's uniforms. Captain Ujie's business card is lodged in between the pages for September 9 and 10 in Fukuda's grim wartime diary, annotated in Fukuda's hand with the captain's home phone number and a notation that the "elephant's skin will be donated to the Imperial Army."⁵⁵

Though his death was sanctified in the September 4 memorial service, John's death was in some ways a separate event, showing us how the institution's staff might have dealt with such matters in the absence of Ōdachi's intervention. His slaughter illuminates the complex moral economy of the zoo. Koga and Fukuda were willing to slaughter animals in response to the cruel circumstances of war, but they acted with attention to the institutional logic and local knowledge of the zoological garden. They were far less concerned with the dynamics of imperial collapse and mass mobilization. Fukuda recalled the day of the order as follows:

August 16 was a day that I will never be able to forget. On that morning I received a call from the Parks Commissioner asking me to come to his office immediately. I had a feeling that this was about the disposal of the big game, and I drew up a list of the animals that had to be killed. Koga had already arrived from the Army Veterinary School when I got there. My prediction had been right on target, but we were told that the poisonings had to take place within a single month. And that we couldn't use rifles because the gunshots would cause public unrest.⁵⁶

With the decision to starve John, it is clear that Fukuda and Koga were capable of killing animals in response to the crisis of war. Only the

speed, scale, and purpose of the killings changed with Ōdachi's intervention on August 16. Both Fukuda and Koga were shocked that so many animals were to be killed within such a short period of time, and they were at a loss as to how to accomplish such a slaughter without the use of rifles.

The two men quickly moved to circumvent aspects of Ōdachi's orders, working feverishly to save dozens of animals deemed innocent or harmless. Both men had repeatedly expressed their emotional attachment to wildlife under their care—Koga in particular had built a gracious public image through the authorship of various books in which he expressed affection for “his” zoo animals, including essays on the rich emotional lives of animals—and they were torn between their duty to the state and their obligations as zoo keepers. In the immediate period following the orders from the governor general, the men's attachments to their animal charges won out, and they set their minds to saving as many animals as possible. It is a moment that shows how tactics of everyday resistance meant to preserve autonomy were employed as individuals adjusted to a political field tilting toward mass martyrdom.

The institution of the zoological garden is premised on a moral contract under which it is assumed that captive animals will receive a degree of care deemed “civilized” or “enlightened.” As the animal protection advocate Watanabe Waichirō put it in an interview in 1942, “The treatment of animals in a given society is a barometer of how far that society has progressed culturally. Countries where the love of animals is weak are clearly culturally inferior.”⁵⁷ Imperial zoological gardens such as Tokyo were the most obvious national barometers. Men like Koga and Fukuda constantly negotiated the terms of the contract in the course of their everyday labors, and Ōdachi's orders pushed at the limits of their sense of moral correctness. Starving John, a confirmed man killer, was one thing, but what about the more docile and affectionate female Asiatic elephant, Tonky? She regularly performed tricks for her trainers and generally behaved as a hefty pet for the zoo staff. Tonky was a favorite of both the zoo staff and the throngs of visitors who lined up to see her perform with her happy companion, Wanri.

Much as notions of personhood—understandings of who should (and who should not) receive full moral consideration within a given community—are crucial in determining the distribution of medical care within human populations, certain animals within the zoo often receive disproportionate allocations of resources thanks to the emotional ties

that bind them to the humans who are responsible for their care. This particular principle was clearly expressed in the efforts of Koga and Fukuda on behalf of particular zoo animals in the late summer of 1943. Tame and affectionate, Tonky received far greater consideration than did the “wild” and dangerous John.

Orders were in place, however, and even as the two men sought to save certain animals, others began to die. The first victim of the zoo massacre was killed on the night of August 17. Probably captured or purchased during a hunting expedition to the client state of Manchukuo, this bear had been part of a group of Manchurian bears given to the Ueno Zoo by Prince Takamatsu. In the final report on the killings, the animal’s age was estimated at six years, and its value at approximately eighty yen. Like almost all of the executions, the bear was killed in the evening after the zoo’s gates had closed behind the departing crowds.

The poisoning was an atypically smooth operation. Because regular feeding schedules had been interrupted on the 16th in order to increase the animals’ appetites, the bear was eager to eat the sweet potato its handler passed through the bars that evening. It immediately consumed the proffered morsel, which had been injected with three grams of nitric strychnine, the dosage dictated by the appendix attached to the 1941 *Emergency Procedures*. Standing outside the cage, keepers kept detailed records of the bear’s death, paying close attention to the effects of the poison on the 273-pound animal.⁵⁸ Absorbed quickly, strychnine passes into the animal’s system through all mucous membranes, especially the stomach and small intestine. The alkaloid extract obtained from the dried ripe seeds of *Strychnos nux vomica*, a small tree native to the East Indies, does not kill quickly and has no anesthetic or narcotic effects. The victim is acutely conscious as the poison takes hold.

Within three minutes of eating the potato the female bear’s legs began to shake, threatening to buckle under her as the strychnine started to work on her central nervous system, inducing an escalating series of spasms that quickly came to affect all striated muscles. Within ten minutes she was exhibiting classic signs of strychnine poisoning, eyes open unnaturally wide, teeth exposed in a terrible smile as muscle spasms pulled at her lips. The bear’s body contorted with painful convulsions that were interrupted by periods of complete muscle relaxation and rapid, panicked breathing. The poison acts on the nervous system: the senses become excruciatingly enhanced such that any amount of stimulation can bring on another series of convulsions. The bear experienced

almost uninterrupted spasms for nearly twenty minutes. Twenty-two minutes after eating the potato, she lay dead on the floor of her cage, probably asphyxiated when a particularly strong series of spasms shot through her respiratory muscles. A male bear was also killed that same night. As the slaughter progressed, keepers placed signs saying “under construction, animals may not be visible” on cages left empty when their inhabitant’s bodies were hauled away, hidden under tarps. Eventually, large signs were placed at the entrance to the zoo itself. Even as the massacre progressed, zoo attendance during the daytime hours was quite large, averaging several thousand patrons per day. We have no records of what the patrons thought as they moved past one empty cage after another or found peccaries or other species in cages still labeled for the larger ursine or feline species that, unbeknownst to them, were being slaughtered.

The first two killings were exceptional in that the animals succumbed to the poison with “relative ease,” as the diary recording the killings makes clear. In his semi-confessional 1968 book, *The Real Story of the Ueno Zoo (Ueno Dōbutsuen no jitsuroku)*, Fukuda describes the squalor:

It should be noted that the animals were not killed by poison alone. Or more honestly, that relatively few animals died from just the poison. Most of them refused to eat the poisoned feed or were given too small a dosage (we were completely inexperienced at this, and we weren’t able to estimate the weight of many of the animals accurately, so all we could do was give it our best guess). So most of the animals did not die peacefully. We had to kill them using all sorts of methods. It was unconscionably cruel.⁵⁹

The manner of each animals’ death mattered to Fukuda and his colleagues, and it shaped how they recounted the killings after the war. Inexperienced and undersupplied with strychnine, staff were faced with a gruesome task as the killings accelerated in order to meet Ōdachi’s August 31 deadline. The animal’s feed may have been stopped in an attempt to increase their appetites, but many animals slated for execution, most notably the enviably diverse collection of ursine species, were naturally able to forego food for extended periods of time in the wild, and they refused to eat bait tainted with the scent of poison. Other animals eagerly bit into the meat or vegetables, only to spit it out when the poison hit their tongues.

Under pressure from superiors, keepers resorted to a collection of spears, wires, ropes, and hammers to complete their grisly task. In some

instances, these weapons were almost certainly the more humane option. Though not as quick as rifles, hammers and spears had the virtue of eliminating guesswork. The drawbacks of the strychnine were evident early in the process, but they became too obvious to ignore when the time came to dispatch Katarina, one of a pair of lions gifted to the Shōwa Emperor by the emperor of Ethiopia in 1931. Katarina had given birth to numerous cubs in the years since her arrival, providing the institution with a dependable series of newsworthy births and feeding young animals into the system of zoos.⁶⁰ By Fukuda's count, it took one hour and thirty-seven minutes to kill the lioness. When keepers could no longer bear to stand by and watch the animal suffer, they stepped in and stabbed her with an improvised spear.⁶¹ Ali, the large male lion that was Katarina's companion and the closest thing to a "real lion" Fukuda says he ever saw, was dispatched much more quickly, swallowing a full dose of poison in a single bite; the male lion died thirty-two minutes after he swallowed the horse meat.⁶²

Like many of the animals slaughtered at the zoo, the lions' carcasses were hauled out of the zoo under tarps and brought to the dissection tables of the Army Veterinary College very early in the morning on the day they were killed. Once they arrived at the school the animals were subjected to full dissection. Each specimen was carefully weighed and photographed before being opened up by the students and their teachers. Every care was taken to preserve the coats of the animals so that they could be passed along to the taxidermist who had been hired—under the condition of absolute secrecy—to preserve and sculpt the corpses. Reports on the dissections show that the interests of the scientists and instructors at the school largely mirrored those of the zoo-going public. They were more concerned with exotic big game species than they were with domestic species that might have been more readily available. Domestic bears (as opposed to exotic foreign species) in particular were not included in the final report on the dissections sent to Ōdachi and Inoshita by the staff of the veterinary college.⁶³

AND THEN THERE WERE TWO

Let us return to the image with which we started our journey: Governor General Ōdachi leading a thin procession through the zoo grounds on September 4. At his side are two young boys in elementary school uniforms. Behind them, against a striped backdrop of a large piece of fabric hung over the Elephant House, stands a larger group of adults and

children watching as the monks and other invited guests process toward the Memorial for Deceased Animals in order to mourn the eradication of all of the zoo's "extremely dangerous" animals, from lions and bears to tigers and elephants.

It is a chilling image that holds an even more chilling secret. Tonky and Wanri, the performing elephants who were the zoo's main attraction, were not dead on September 4, 1943. They sat starving behind the red and white striped fabric in the background of the image, kept quiet by their obedient respect for their keeper's orders. The ceremony celebrating the sacrifice of the "animal martyrs" took place five days after John's death. Since keepers had held out hope for a transfer of these favorite animals, strict orders to deny the pair food had only come down on August 25, a mere ten days before the ceremony. There was not enough time to starve the animals, and they refused to eat poisoned forage. Obedient to the end, they followed their keepers orders to stay quiet so well that records indicate that Ōdachi and the entire procession walked past on their way to the celebrate the death of the two elephants—who would be singled out during the memorial service as particularly virtuous martyrs—without any hint that the huge animals lay dying just a few feet away.

Early in the process, the keepers were not alone in attempting to save the animals. The same day that Koga, Fukuda, and Inoshita discussed Ōdachi's orders, they also penned letters to several other zoological gardens asking if they might be able to take possession of certain animals from Tokyo's collection. One such letter, addressed to zoo directors in Sendai and Nagoya, reads as follows:

Please excuse this sudden solicitation, and please keep these communications strictly private. I know that we all share hearty salutations in celebration of our ongoing progress in the war which is doing so much for our national glory. However, it has become necessary to put in place certain safety measures here in response to the enemy's reprisals since one imagines that this area will almost certainly be their first target. Because we are located in the center of the capital, we have decided to evacuate animals. Since your gardens are in relatively safe areas, if you would like to take custody of these animals we would be pleased to either present them to you as gifts or as part of an exchange. We would ask to revisit these arrangements once peace has come. Our shipping budget is very tight at the moment. We ask that if interested you contact us immediately with your response.⁶⁴

The letter, which makes no mention of the ongoing massacre, closes by offering two spotted leopards and two black leopards to the Nagoya

Zoo and one female elephant, Tonky, to the Sendai Zoo. Similar communications were sent to other zoological gardens.

For a brief moment, it seemed as if Tonky might escape the slaughter and be removed to the relative safety of Sendai, a regional city in north-eastern Japan. Ezawa Sōji (1906–1972), the director of Sendai Zoo, responded to Fukuda’s letter immediately, writing that he would be thrilled to take possession of Tonky, and that a member of his staff would arrive in Tokyo on the 23rd or 24th of August.⁶⁵ The response from Nagoya was somewhat more guarded. Nagoya’s collection did not contain black leopards, and the director stated that he would be very pleased to add the pair offered by Tokyo to his collection. However, the acquisition would have to receive approval from the city administrators, as that city’s zoo was in the process of reevaluating the size of their collection in response to food shortages and safety concerns.⁶⁶

When Ezawa’s assistant, a man named Ishii, arrived from Sendai on the 23rd, he offered not only to take possession of the elephant but also to trade several baboons for Tokyo’s male spotted leopard. Enlivened at the prospect of saving at least two animals, Fukuda went immediately to meet with his superior, Inoshita, and started making preparations for the transport of the two animals. These dealings were abruptly cut short a few hours later by a call from Inoshita’s office ordering a stop to all preparations for the “evacuation” (*sokai*) of the elephant and any other animals. Inoshita, it seems, had received a phone call from an infuriated Ōdachi. The scheduled killings were to take place in absolute secrecy and as ordered, and a memorial service was to be arranged within the grounds of the zoological garden as scheduled. Ishii returned to Sendai empty handed.⁶⁷

Given his apparent motives, Ōdachi’s anger is understandable. The zoo sacrifice was designed to inspire a greater degree of dedication and determination among Tokyo’s residents in preparation for the arrival of American bombers and troops. The “evacuation” of the institution’s most popular elephant, an animal endowed with personality and character in the wider media, hardly delivered the sort of message that Ōdachi desired. Large-scale evacuation programs were, in fact, enacted once the capital came in range of Allied bombers in 1944, and Ōdachi supported them so long as they did not in his estimation weaken the war effort, but it is crucial to remember that the sacrifice occurred just as the nation’s leaders were struggling to come to terms with the altered military situation. Ōdachi may have forecast the arrival of American bombers, but in 1943 his plans did not extend to animal “evacuations,” or

sokai, the same term that would be used for the removal of children from the capital once bombers began to appear with regularity the next year.⁶⁸

The governor general was also concerned that the movement of so large an animal through the streets of central Tokyo would cause public unrest. Tonky was sure to draw crowds. This was precisely the sort of spectacle that the military police hoped to avoid. Not only would it send the wrong message to the capital's population, it would almost certainly draw people into the city's streets, and the wartime state was acutely allergic to any large gathering not dedicated to the celebration of the war effort. In fact, when word of the elephant's potential removal reached the Public Safety Division of the Tokyo Police, an inspector was immediately dispatched to the zoo to confirm that no suspicious activities were taking place. This inspection came in addition to inquiries from the head of the military police stationed in Tokyo and the chief of the Ueno Park police station. Fukuda's actions were closely monitored by a coterie of interested agencies, then, and his diary is filled with their name cards and notations on their visits.

Each of the agencies was concerned that rumors of something strange happening at the zoo were beginning to spread throughout the capital. By the time the police inspector arrived at the zoo, the killings had already passed through their first phase. The slaughter was brought to a halt for a single day on August 23rd while police consulted with Inoshita and Fukuda, but they resumed again on the 24th, the same day that orders arrived sealing Tonky's fate.⁶⁹

Inoshita's office kept the governor general's staff much more accurately informed of events as they unfolded after this direct inspection. In one of his formal reports to Ōdachi's office on the sacrifice, Inoshita notified the governor general that zoo staff were scheduled to kill twenty-two animals through strychnine poisoning in the days between August 17 and August 31. Among the animals scheduled for death, the report stated, were several specimens that deserved special note. These included a pair of lions presented to the zoo by the Imperial Household Ministry, a Korean bear donated by Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki (1884–1948), and a Malaysian bear donated by the Sultan of Johore through the good offices of the "Tiger Hunting Duke," Tokugawa Yoshichika. The list also noted a pair of Manchurian bears brought to the zoo by Prince Takamatsu and an elephant donated to the children of Japan by the Boy Scouts of Thailand, Wanri. The listing may have been an effort by Inoshita to impress upon Ōdachi that these were not just any animals.

But lineage and pedigree did not protect the animals, and their remarkable value may, in fact, have made them even more appealing as ideological media. Each of them was dead before the end of September.⁷⁰

Inoshita's report outlined more than simply which animals were to die. It also addressed the ways in which the zoo administration would manage information surrounding the sacrifice. Mindful of Ōdachi's concern for secrecy, Inoshita stressed that all information regarding the killings would be kept strictly secret, and that all the public announcements would come from the governor general's own Office of Information, which would be kept abreast of events as they unfolded. He also confirmed that a large number of monks from the Youth Society for Buddhist Tradition (Shidō Bukkyō Seinen Dentō Kai) would join in the memorial service, which was to be modeled on celebrations of animal war dead that had taken place at the zoological gardens each year since the war began in 1931. In a notable departure from past ritual practice, however, Inoshita emphasized that the flesh and bones from these animal martyrs would be carefully maintained and interred alongside the zoo's current Memorial to Deceased Animals (in past years carcasses had been disposed of elsewhere). Plans for a new cenotaph commemorating the unique sacrifice of these martyred animals were drawn up with the idea that the monument would be constructed soon after the early September ritual.⁷¹

Inoshita further emphasized, with no apparent irony, that the slaughter was being carried out in accordance with the zoo's own commitment to rational scientific principles. The report stipulated that the scientific value of all animal carcasses would be evaluated in consultation with the staff of the Army Veterinary College, "an institution with which the zoological garden maintains strong ties," and that the value of a particular specimen would dictate the ways in which it was handled. Regardless of their rarity, all animals would be put to use in support of "scientific research" (*gakujutsu kenkyū*), providing dissection opportunities for faculty and students from the school. Following dissection, coats and skins would be removed from the carcasses and prepared for preservation. In the case of particularly rare exotic animals, the specimens would be rendered via taxidermy into natural-historical specimens that were to be put on display within the zoo in the months following the sacrifice, as in fact they were. In the days following the ceremony on September 4 the signage in the Taxidermy House was amended. The exhibit was dedicated to the zoo's "animal martyrs." But, of course, not all of the "martyrs" were dead. The elephants remained

alive for well over two weeks after Abbot Ōmori and his monks sanctified their deaths.⁷²

When firm orders arrived demanding that the pair of female elephants be killed, keepers began to explore ways to put the animals to death. They set about trying to poison the pair. When even the tender skin behind the animals' ears proved too thick for needle injections of cyanide and strychnine, keepers saturated potatoes with massive doses of strychnine and offered them to the elephants. Keepers put the animals at ease by offering them several untainted morsels, which the elephants eagerly consumed, occasionally showing thanks by caressing the keepers with their soft trunks. Once the keepers believed that the animals had relaxed, they would slip the elephants a poisoned potato. Each time they substituted a tainted potato, however, the animals would spit the offending tuber out unchewed. Undeterred, the keepers continued to offer potatoes injected with various doses of poison, hoping that the elephants would eat one if the dosage were lowered or they relaxed enough. This continued for quite some time, and the elephants eventually lost their tempers with the small crowd who had gathered to offer them tainted treats. When a small pile of poisoned potatoes accumulated at the feet of the animals, they began throwing the discarded food across the room at a group of military officers and zoo administrators who stood monitoring the proceedings. Apparently, their aim was rather good, and the keepers stopped trying to feed the animals potatoes.⁷³

As heartening as this small act of defiance is, it did not alter the animals' fate. To borrow Fukuda's words, "the decision was made" once the funeral procession marched past their cage and abbot Ōmori performed rites for the two elephants.⁷⁴ This realization was slow in coming to the elephants' keepers. The two men had each protested loudly when Fukuda ordered them to starve Tonky and Wanri. Like Fukuda himself, they did not support the governor general's decision, and they risked censure by voicing their concerns openly. As Fukuda soon found out, their protests did not stop at words. Both men started quietly slipping their elephants untainted vegetables and potatoes when the attempt to poison them failed.

Tonky in particular was hard to refuse. Brought to Tokyo when she was only four years old, zoo staff had seen Tonky grow into a beautiful, docile, affectionate adolescent. The genial giant would greet keepers with a salute of her trunk as they walked past her cage each morning, and she regularly begged treats from staff by performing tricks as they approached. Keepers used to take her out of her cage each morning

before the gardens opened for a stroll around the grounds, where she would nuzzle staff with her trunk and trumpet playfully at men and women as they hustled into work. For the first week or so after her feed had been cut, Tonky continued to perform tricks as Fukuda and other staff passed the Elephant House, occasionally sounding her trunk in a high-pitched appeal. As she weakened, however, the tricks became fewer and fewer, and eventually she no longer even raised her trunk. Still, fortified by the small amounts of food and water that had been secretly delivered, Tonky outlived her larger, more robust companion Wanri.⁷⁵

Poisoned by her own body when unevacuated waste products reached toxic levels and were absorbed into her bloodstream, Wanri finally succumbed at 9:25 P.M. on September 11. Fukuda's diary entry for the day describes how Tonky, the smaller of the two females, caressed the prostrate body of her longtime companion as Wanri lay dying on the floor of the Elephant House. Once Wanri had passed away, Tonky continued to caress Wanri's corpse in the manner of grieving elephants in the wild. Tonky only left the dead elephant's side when her keepers pulled her away so that the dissection team could commence their work. As with John, Wanri's hide was donated to the army. According to zoo records, the rest of her remains were interred with the other animals' in front of the memorial, where they remain to this day.⁷⁶

When Tonky did not immediately follow Wanri it became apparent to Koga, who was part of the dissection team, that someone was slipping food to the younger elephant. Calling Fukuda aside, Koga sternly instructed the interim director to inform the elephant's keeper, Sugaya, that the animal was now military property and continued feeding was absolutely unacceptable. Tonky had to be killed. He further ordered Fukuda to attempt to poison the pachyderm again, since her hunger would no doubt be greater and her resistance perhaps lower. On September 13th the elephant, noticeably thinner, was offered poisoned potatoes once again. This time, rather than throwing the poisoned vegetables at onlookers she simply let them drop to the ground, still refusing to eat them. Hoping that cyanide would work where strychnine had failed, keepers offered Tonky a pail of water laced with the poison. Whether because of scent or because she sensed something was amiss, she refused the liquid. On the 14th, Fukuda informed Koga that continued starvation was the only option. Nine days later, at 6:30 A.M. on September 24, Fukuda received a call at his home from the keeper on night watch informing him that Tonky had died at 2:42 A.M., watched

over by her loyal keeper, Sugaya. With Tonky's death, imperial Japan's modern animal sacrifice came to a close, at least at Ueno.

In point of fact, the killings had only just begun. Ueno set the stage for institutions at home and overseas. Zoological gardens and circuses throughout the empire destroyed the core of their collections in the two years after Ueno's Great Zoo Massacre, usually as a hedge against cage breaches in the event of bombings, and often in response to direct orders from Home Ministry authorities. In each case, the reasons for the orders were clear: the course of the war had shifted decisively. The protocols of self-sacrifice were now inescapable. Japan's special attack forces—popularly known as *kamikaze* in the West, but inclusive of a host of operations, from submarine units to airplanes—came together between late 1944 and early 1945, and news media amplified the grim innovation.⁷⁷

The majority of the captive animals killed in the home islands were dead before Allied aircraft began bombing Japanese cities in November 1944. Osaka's Tennōji Zoological Garden and Ueno's sister institution in Tokyo, the Inokashira Nature Culture Park, were the first to follow Ōdachi's lead, enacting emergency measures immediately following Ueno's ceremony for animal martyrs.⁷⁸ The empire's three large colonial zoos—the Taipei Zoo, the Seoul Zoo, and Shinkyō Zoo—were among the last to follow suit, instituting their own liquidation policies only as the conflict reached its final phase in late 1944 and 1945. In many cases propitiation rites (private and in some cases public) were performed at gardens, and in each case records of the killings radiate the same surreal ambiguities as the event at Ueno. Japan's animal kingdom was now being used to close the circuit of human biopolitical reduction in the context of total war. Some three hundred large mammals, raptors, and reptiles were killed between September 1943 and August 1945. By 1946 only two elephants remained alive in Japan. In 1940 there had been more than twenty.

CONCLUSION

It matters how the animals died at Ueno. It matters in ethical terms to the extent that animals merit moral consideration, even in the most trying times. It matters in historical terms as well. The manner of the elephants' deaths opened up a space not only for the pursuit of total mobilization—the elevation of a cult of personal sacrifice in the domestic sphere—but also for the repudiation of war as fundamentally counter

to the realization of true human dignity in the postwar era. Summoned by the need to make sense of the war and the enduring legacy of their strange deaths, the ghosts of the zoo's sacrificed elephants returned to haunt postwar Japan. Neither Abbot Ōmori and his coterie of monks nor Governor General Ōdachi and the wartime media managed to overcome the sense of betrayal generated by the Great Zoo Massacre in 1943, sentiments and emotions that I have tried to evoke at points in this chapter as a means of bringing this historical moment—the “riddle” of wartime culture with which we began—more forcefully into the present. We cannot, I think, understand the “dark valley” of Japan's imperial nadir without accounting for the powerful emotions of the time, and the story of Ueno's “animal martyrs” offers us a connection with that world.

We are not alone in making use of that connection, a fact that makes it all the more valuable in historical terms. The events of the Great Zoo Massacre returned to public consciousness soon after the war ended. It is impossible to say whether the spark for this return to memory came from postwar children eager to see “real elephants,” newspaper reporters interested in a story, or Koga himself, who sought to redefine his role in the slaughter without denying it, but by 1949 a nationwide chorus rose up demanding the undoing of the trauma at Ueno via the return of the elephants to the zoo. Tonky and Wanri and John began to appear in *kamishibai* (picture stories narrated for an audience by a storyteller) and in popular short fiction. The postwar version of the massacre reached its canonical form in “The Pathetic Elephants” (*Kawaisōna Zō*), a short story by the award-winning children's author, Tsuchiya Yukio (1904–1999).⁷⁹ Tsuchiya had written several jingoistic stories of Japan's imperial heyday, children's adventures in the context of empire, but it was Ueno's elephants that cinched his fame. The story was first published as a part of a collection of essays approved for the grade school curriculum by both the U.S.-led Supreme Command Allied Powers (SCAP), which ruled the country for seven years after 1945, and the Japanese Ministry of Education.

The story became a perennial favorite of conservative Ministry of Education bureaucrats and left-leaning grade school teachers alike. Half a century after the war ended, an expanded and illustrated version of *Kawaisōna Zō* ranked among the best-selling children's stories in the country. Reframed as a fairy tale of popular victimization and national suffering aimed at the nation's youngsters, the fascist spectacle led by Governor General Ōdachi was transformed into a pacifist parable.

Much like wartime “Military Animal” commemorative zoo maps, which suggested that parents use them as bedtime stories, such readings helped to usher generations of children into the national community of selective war memory and postimperial amnesia. The analysis of such micropolitical acts can tell us many things, but in the context of this chapter and the next they serve to underscore the zoological garden’s role as a broker between not just the natural and the social worlds—which were strategically collapsed in the sacrifice and then rebuilt to suit Ōdachi’s agenda—but also between mass culture and social practice. The culture of spectacle did more than entertain passive patrons; it facilitated changes in thought and action through the manipulation of emotion and curiosity, drafting children and their parents first into the wartime culture of self-abnegation and later into the service of a new consumer-oriented, politically pacifist postwar order.

The imaginary blood of the Great Zoo Massacre runs through the circulatory system of postwar Japan’s memory industry, and it became more important over time. *The Pathetic Elephants* sold well over one million copies between 1970 and 1998, and topped two million by 2005. As of 2007 the book had gone through more than one hundred and fifty reprintings and spawned dozens of alternate versions, counter-narratives, and television and stage dramatizations. Doraemon, the well-known animated robot cat, offered a version of the story. Radio networks carried the voice of Akiyama Chieko, a conservative voice of folksy common sense akin to Paul Harvey in the United States, throughout the country each August 15—the date of Japan’s 1945 surrender—as she recited the full text of Tsuchiya’s story live over the air.⁸⁰ Her photo, rather than Tsuchiya’s, appears on the cover of several versions of the book, and she released a popular record album of her rendition. Begun in 1967 as the Japanese economy matured and discontent with the Vietnam War fed postwar Japan’s growing pacifist consensus, Akiyama’s readings continued into the twenty-first century, slowly taking on the patina of tradition in the fast-paced media landscape of late twentieth-century Japan.

The Pathetic Elephants is so widely recognized that the critic Hasegawa Ushio has identified it as a defining “myth” for the postwar nation.⁸¹ Like all myths of any consequence, this one carries multiple meanings, not all of them acknowledged. The zoo’s slaughtered animals are now fixed in the master narrative of postwar Japanese “victim consciousness,” wherein the Japanese people are cast as victims of the rapacious Japanese military. In the case of the sacrifice, people were

encouraged to identify with the animal victims rather than those who ordered the killing, an ironic appropriation of Ōdachi's own logic. As martyrs to the war, the animals have allowed people to satisfy the compulsion to return to and mourn the trauma of conflict without necessarily considering its historical lessons.⁸² For generations of children growing up in a country where even limited education about the war is a problem of intense national debate and international controversy, the forced starvation of the zoo's elephants may rank among the most familiar events of the conflict.⁸³ This is almost certainly the case in the realm of sentiment, where the emotional resonance of a story about the heartless starvation of helpless animals has often eclipsed nonfiction accounts of stories about adults. Innocent and untarnished, children and animals are disproportionately prominent in postwar mediations on the war and its meaning.

Even as the pathetic sacrifice of the zoo's animals has been aestheticized into an object of ongoing mourning, the garden's (and the nation's) historical connections with colonialism and imperialism have been actively erased and then forgotten, an act of institutional amnesia that remains in effect to this day. "War" and "empire," as the next chapter shows, were decoupled in the postwar zoo—as they were in works such as Tsuchiya's story, which rendered Governor General Ōdachi (a civilian bureaucrat) into a uniformed officer in the Imperial Japanese Army. The "war" was mourned at tragedy; the "empire" was forgotten, and it was in part the intense suffering of these strange "animal martyrs"—delivered to children at their bedsides and in their school textbooks—that facilitated that postimperial amnesia.