



Japanese Internment in Australia  
during World War II

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## Summary

During World War II Australia held approximately 4,000 civilian Japanese internees. Approximately 3,000, from such parts of South-east Asia or the South Pacific as the Netherlands East Indies, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands and New Zealand, were held on behalf of other Allied Governments. They included over 600 Formosans who had been arrested as Japanese.

In 1939-41 internment of registered aliens of German and Italian origin living in Australia had been selective - 31% and 32% respectively. By comparison, in 1941-2 97% of registered Japanese aliens were interned. This thesis tells of their experiences. Much of it is devoted to reconstructing camp life and to the consequences of internment. The thesis also examines the Australian Government's internment policies, and its attitude to releases.

The Japanese were interned in three camps - Loveday in South Australia, Hay in New South Wales and Tatura in Victoria. The general atmosphere among internees in all three camps was one of resignation. Interviews with former internees indicate that the majority of the Japanese settled into the camps well and found ways to make life behind barbed wire tolerable. Former internees agreed that their treatment by Australian authorities was excellent. There was, however, some internal friction between internees. Each compound was run by an internees' committee which had firm control. Although it has proved difficult to discover how the committees kept control, it is clear that anyone who did not conform to accepted conduct was subject to intimidation.

At the end of the war, all Japanese, except for the Australian-born or those who had Australian-born children, were repatriated to Japan. Some asked to remain in Australia or to be sent back to their homes in South-east Asia or the Pacific islands. They were refused permission by the governments involved. A few eventually returned to Australia and other former homes.

Even though the numbers were far larger, there are some parallels to the Australian experience among Japanese interned in North America. Americans and Canadians of Japanese extraction, in addition to long-term Japanese residents of both countries, were displaced during hostilities with Japan. As in Australia their liberty was curtailed and in many cases property was forfeited.