

TERRIBLE STORY OF JAP CANNIBALISM

Australian Infantrymen Found Bodies Stripped of Flesh: Vile Cooking Pots

NEW BRITAIN.—In their nightmare retreat along the Rai Coast in 1944, the Japanese went in for an orgy of cannibalism. In the villages of Tapen and Wandiluk, Japanese bodies were found stripped of flesh, and human flesh was cooking over fires or packed in haversacks ready for the trail. A whole company of Australian infantry will bear witness to these facts. The first suspicion that the shattered enemy forces might have taken to cannibalism came after the capture of Gali on February 8, 1944, writes war correspondent John Quinn.

I joined the advancing Australians on the following day. During the rest halt men told me that a patrol pushing on from Gali had shot a Japanese on the track.

Another patrol following some minutes behind found that two more Japanese had come out of the jungle, and shot them in the act of carving slices of flesh from the dead man.

I was incredulous, but the report was officially confirmed. The general feeling then was that it was an isolated act of hunger-crazed men.

After the link-up with the Americans at Yagomi on February 10, 1944, Australians pushed into the Finisterres, pursuing remnants of Japanese. Reports started coming back indicating that the Gali incident after all was but a pointer to things far more horrible.

Tapen fell on February 17. Private Tom Griffiths, of Coniston, NSW, was wounded in action. On the beach at Weber Point he gave me the first eye-witness story.

He said that in the shambles of Tapen he had seen two bodies stripped of flesh. He had seen a liver hanging in a hut, human flesh broiling over open fires, and simmering in dioxies.

"Everything I'm telling you is God's truth," he said, as though he found it hard to believe the evidence of his eyes.

Two days later Wandiluk fell, and more reports of stripped bodies and cooking flesh came in.

The body of a recently dead Japanese was then found in the jungle near Gali. The dead man's gear bag was found full of human flesh.

With another war correspondent, I went to the scene. It was in a dank jungle clearing near a stream. We emptied six steaks, obviously cut from the buttocks of a man, out of a black rubber bag.

Nearby was a bowl full of paw paw and sliced cucumber. The slightly decomposed body of the cannibal lay sprawled grotesquely against the trunk of a tree.

We hastily left, and Aldridge muttered, "I can't believe it." Neither could I. But the ghastly business was confirmed when on the afternoon of February 25 I saw four officers at Gali who had returned from the mountain pursuit.

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They were Sydney men, Captain F. C. S. Farmer, of Enmore, commanding officer of Don Company, which took both Tapen and Wandiluk; Captain R. R. Escott, of Concord, second in command; Lieutenant R. A. Youdon, of Hunter's Hill; and Lieutenant G. S. Rennie, of Burwood. This is their story of the two villages:

Tapen was a large village of more than 130 huts. The Australian company attacked in the late afternoon of February 17, surprising the Japanese while they were preparing their evening meal.

After the action the officers set out to inspect the village and count the enemy dead.

In the middle of the village was a large hut built on stilts. The officers called it "the butcher's shop." Here they found a body completely stripped of flesh from head to feet.

Captain Farmer said the body was so skillfully dissected as to suggest

This grim and terrible story, untold for more than a year for censorship reasons, has just been released.

that a surgeon had done the grisly work. And—grimmiest touch of all—alongside the body were cards and dice.

Outside the death-house were two dioxies full of human flesh, ready for cooking, and several gourds full of neatly sliced steaks. Round the hut lay other stripped skeletons.

The officers said that in Tapen the butchery seemed to be organised. On the outskirts of the village they crept into a hut built low to the ground. Here in the gloom they found a second body with flesh cut from the legs and arms.

"I've never seen such an expression of terror and horror as was on the face of that dead Japanese," said Captain Farmer.

Horror mounted on horror. In one hut Lieutenant Rennie opened a haversack and found two bundles wrapped in banana leaves. They contained a human heart and liver, still fresh.

Another hut had two dioxies of rice and one of flesh stewing over the fire.

Another hut had two dioxies of rice and one of flesh stewing over the fire. In a third, a liver was cooking over an open fire.

Captain Farmer wanted all the witnesses he could get, so he paraded his entire company and showed them the evidence of Japanese depravity. Tough infantrymen looked sick- and were sick.

The four officers were at a loss to understand why the Japs had gone in for cannibalism. Inspection showed they had rice in the native gardens, and plentiful supplies of vegetables were growing. Tapen was as rotten as a festering sore. There was only one way to purge it. The Australians burnt the village to the ground.