**Life After the Japanese Took Over**

The Japanese provided no security for the people of Hong Kong, but instead, they brought them intolerable horror. Under their rule, a great number of people died of hunger, while many others were murdered by the Japanese. The Japanese also made no effort to dispose of the bodies, and the streets became the homes to corpses as well as the homes to the poor.

“Even if we were assured that we would live with protection, many would still have died of hunger. I came from a family that could be considered as somewhat wealthy, but when the war erupted, our business fell with failure.” I glanced up with surprise as my grandfather described the situation, acknowledging for the first time the war had destroyed my family’s wealth. “When I moved to Hong Kong, I no longer had much money. Life was already difficult, but to make matters worse, when the Japanese gained control, they immediately forbade us to use our currency. In order to buy anything, we needed the Japanese military notes.”

*The Japanese military notes*

I had already assumed that, in times of war, many people could not even afford the basic necessities, but on top of that, the exchange rate between the Hong Kong dollar and the Japanese military notes was harshly unfair. The ration of rice distributed was severely minute, and the rice was mixed with sand. Food, the basic need for survival, had become a luxury that many could not afford.

“There was also a shortage of wood.” My grandfather paused for a second, suggesting a hint of regret. “We lost our respect for the dead, and not only did we burn our own furniture, we broke into their houses, and burned theirs as well. The public buildings didn’t escape our eyes either—we burned those too. ”

I inquired about the government officials, wondering why they wouldn’t even defend a building like the Hong Kong University. My grandfather looked at me with a bit of amusement and explained how the police were not even Chinese, but instead, the Japanese had replaced them with Indians. “Even if they were Chinese, they probably had better things to worry about than the buildings. The Indians were worse. They took no action when the Japanese murdered our lives, so why would they care when buildings were burned?”

I twitched slightly at my grandfather’s words, and with both anxiety and reluctance, I urged him to continue. “The Japanese would murder us without reason, and they sickeningly found pleasure in it. Whenever we walked by them, we had to lower our heads, directing our eyes to the floor. If our gaze ever met theirs, we would have no hope for survival.”

The Japanese aimed their malicious torture towards two simple goals. First of all, they wanted to carve fear into the citizens’ lives, hoping to discourage them from any plans of rebellion. In order to prove their power, they used violence as the weapon, and a number of them found delight in killing. Secondly, they wanted to shrink the population of Hong Kong to a size which they would be able control. In 1941, Hong Kong held about 1.64 million people, but by the end of the war, the Japanese had successfully reduced the number to 600,000. Many were encouraged to move back to China, but since this did not accomplish as much as they desired, they turned to other methods. Some were forced to move back, while others were essentially killed. Not only did this help reduce the population, others were also frightened away. One of the most horrifying techniques that they had used was to randomly pick up truckloads of people who were innocently walking in the streets. Dropping them off at the junks in the habors, they would be sent out into the sea, where they would later be set on fire.

Many people who opposed the Japanese were severely tortured and killed, and when asked, my grandfather nodded with disappointment. “But death was not only destined for the people who opposed, but for every other unfortunate soul as well. I was nearly murdered a few times. I remember once, when a ship had been bombed at the shore, everyone ran there to see if there was anything that he could take. We started to walk back after realizing that the Japanese had already collected everything there was, but they stopped us before we could leave. We had to form a line, and the first person who walked passed them was attacked, as was the second. I was the third person. I took off my hat and bowed, almost seeming like I was bidding my last farewell. To my surprise, they allowed me to pass.”

I immediately surmised that my grandfather would have been overwhelmed with joy, but he took a moment before replying. “At that time, no. I wasn’t exceptionally glad.”

Like many other people, most of my grandfather’s friends and family had passed away for one reason or another. The meaning of life started to fade away, and there seemed to be no meaning for survival. Many were murdered either by hunger or by the Japanese.