

Better Late than Never? Mizuki Shigeru's Trans-War Reflections on Journeys to New Britain Island

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Renowned manga artist Mizuki Shigeru's (1922–2015) multiple wartime memoirs and travelogues of his time in New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea, comprise a historical literature that provides insights into both the constant features and the shifts in Mizuki's perceptions. This article explores Mizuki's repeated renditions of his journeys by charting his evolving attitudes of admiration, disillusionment, resolution, and closure. While he identified with the villagers' carefree lifestyle as an antithesis to the work-to-rule postwar Japanese work ethic, each visit made him more concerned about the decline in the idyllic qualities of New Britain Island. The deaths of Emperor Hirohito in 1989 and of ToPetro, Mizuki's closest village friend, a few years later spurred introspection on his wartime memory and his attitude toward the villagers. Mizuki grew receptive toward the villagers' past and present grievances and reevaluated his relationship with them. He intended his parting gestures to repay the moral debt he had incurred. However, he failed to ask himself what his journeys meant to ToPetro and the villagers. This article suggests that a consideration of Mizuki's changing reflections of these relationships could form a sub-genre of war veterans' travelogues of their former battle site visits. Their writings may be understood to echo the broader power dynamics of the relationship between Japan and Papua New Guinea from the wartime period through to the postwar era.

Keywords: Pacific War, travel writing, interpersonal relationships, *manga*, Nanyo-Orientalism, nostalgia, Papua New Guinea

Introduction

The renowned manga artist Mizuki Shigeru 水木しげる (1922–2015, birth name Mura Shigeru 武良茂), repeatedly drew images of himself suffering from a condition that he called *nanpōbyō* 南方病 (South Seas syndrome) at the height of his commercial success in the 1970s. Mizuki recalled that *nanpōbyō* gave him an insatiable yearning for New Britain Island in eastern Papua New Guinea, and the people of Namale village, on the Gazelle Peninsula of the island. From November 1943 until his repatriation in March 1946, Mizuki

WHEN JOURNEY TOOK PLACE	MAIN EVENT	INTERPRETATIONS	VILLAGERS' RESPONSES
Wartime	Mizuki befriends villagers	Village as paradise	Villagers accepts Mizuki as member
1970s	Mizuki revisits Namale	Disillusionment	Villagers demand Mizuki contribute or give gifts
Late 1980s	Mizuki presents pick-up truck to villagers	Mizuki gives three different interpretations of the truck	ToPetro acknowledges belated gift
1994	Mizuki sponsors ToPetro's funeral	compensation, closure	Villagers join the funeral

Figure 1. Four phases of Mizuki's travelogues to Namale.

served in the 229th Infantry Regiment of the 38th Division.¹ Between 1970 and 1994, he visited New Britain more than ten times. Mizuki traveled without the knowledge of his demanding publishers and he found that only Namale offered him a much-needed tonic for his *nanpōbyō*.² Despite the enormous influence exerted on him by his time in New Britain, both during and after the war, the scholarly interest in his journeys has been negligible. However, just as Mizuki's upbringing influenced his manga on *yōkai*, one could similarly argue that his travel informed his work. His travelogues provide evidence for the shifts in his attitude to the village and the villagers in the context of the Japanese cultural imagination of the South Seas Islands, encompassing a faraway location such as New Britain Island.

This article argues that Mizuki's multiple retellings and redrawings represent not only his interactions with the villagers but also the underlying power dynamics between Japan and Papua New Guinea that altered from the wartime to the postwar eras. Mizuki wrote and drew his way through an intractable dilemma between his nostalgia for the wartime village and his disillusionment with the postwar village. Central to Mizuki's changing perceptions of Namale were two villagers: ToPetro, Mizuki's closest friend in wartime who later became the village headsman, and EPupe, a woman of astounding beauty in appearance and demeanor. Mizuki's multiple renditions of Namale chart the path of admiration, disillusionment, and resolution over four periods of his journeying. Firstly, Mizuki depicts the wartime village as a paradise where he achieves self-actualization through obtaining the villagers' acceptance. The second period concerns his journeys in the 1970s, in which his disillusionment sets in. The third period covers a single journey that Mizuki takes in the late 1980s. On this trip, Mizuki gives a pick-up truck to ToPetro as a

1 Mura adopted Mizuki as his pen name on his debut as a manga artist in the 1950s; he seldom used Mura in public or in his writing.

2 At times, the records refer to Papua New Guinea, which could mean New Britain as well as the rest of the nation. Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 134.

gift. ToPetro's response affords Mizuki fertile ground for reflection on his friendship with ToPetro. The fourth period comprises two narratives on ToPetro's funeral, which Mizuki sponsored and attended in 1994 (see figure 1).

Mizuki's travel recollections inhabit two scholarly spaces: Nanyō-Orientalism and travel writing. Nanyō-Orientalism denotes a set of literary tropes that Japanese writers employ to create, recreate, and, at times, challenge assumptions of hierarchy between the hegemonic Japanese and the subordinate Pacific Islanders. Naoto Sudo, who coined the term, insists that Nanyō-Orientalism is not a simple mechanism for imposing Japanese superiority. Rather, it is a complex nexus of "fears and desires that arose from Japan's imperialist expansion and its concern over the activities of other powers in the Pacific region."³ Sudo's conceptualization is derived from Mary Louise Pratt's influential *Imperial Eyes*, which treats the travelogue as a text speaking for or against the prevailing ethos of European imperialism. The metropolitan traveler's portrayal of what Pratt termed the *travelees*—the people and places the traveler visits, meets, and writes about—does not always denigrate the indigenous people or champion metropolitan values, but sometimes celebrates the indigenous people's culture to criticize the excess of the industrialized society.⁴ Employing these idioms of Nanyō-Orientalism and travel writing can bridge the two disciplines and illuminate how Mizuki's sentiments are manifested in his portrayals of himself and the villagers.

What makes Mizuki's writing worth analyzing is that he visited the same place and met the same people many times from wartime to the 1990s, whereas travel writers generally form their impressions from a single journey and a single encounter with the people with whom they interact. Mizuki's depictions illuminate his changing impressions of the Namale village and the local people's perceptions and receptions of the traveler. The historian Roman Rosenbaum identifies the different meanings—historical, fictional, and autobiographical—that Mizuki gives to his war-themed manga. Rosenbaum finds that Mizuki's reflections on his combat experience are contingent on the wider developments in Japan.⁵ This observation is useful for the analysis that follows. Mizuki traveled during the time of Japan's rapid postwar economic recovery, which affected Japan's collective memories of the war and its relationship with Papua New Guinea.

To Heaven and Back

A sharp contrast between heaven and hell dominates the accounts of wartime in all of Mizuki's writing. Mizuki's method involves rendering the villagers into the civilized Other who live in harmony with nature. In Mizuki's eyes, the villagers live in abundance; they neither experience hunger, nor are they subject to military discipline. The Japanese, by contrast, are barbaric degenerates living in a hell of deprivation, disease, and hunger, additionally enduring the constant threat of Allied attacks. For Mizuki, a conscript and a low-ranking soldier, life in the Japanese military was nothing but miserable. He suffered from constant bullying by his superiors, for his clumsiness and reticence to obey orders, as well as from recurrent bouts of malaria and the loss of his left arm in an aerial raid.

3 Sudo 2010, p. 2.

4 Pratt 2008, *passim*, for example pp. 8, 133, and 225.

5 Rosenbaum 2008, p. 366.

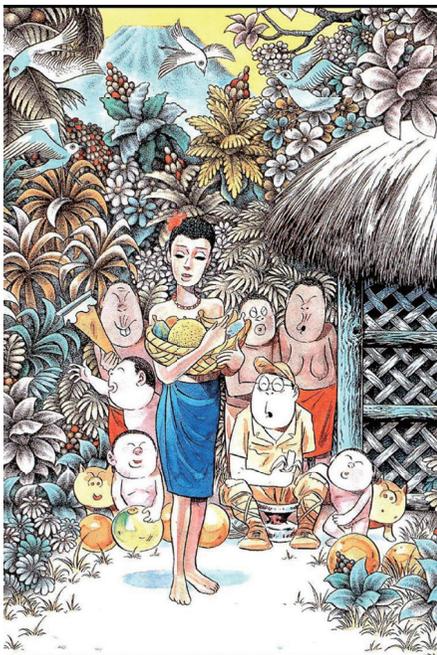


Figure 2. Mizuki and the villagers. Mizuki, on the right, is sitting with a peeled banana in his hand. The woman in the middle with a fruit basket is EPupe, whom Mizuki found exceptionally beautiful. Image reproduced from Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 19.

What made Mizuki's war experience unique was the exceptional rapport he created with the villagers. The interactions he had with the villagers were a welcome break from his hellish military life. It thereby initiated a hell-and-heaven cycle that he repeated in his writing. What led to his friendship with the villagers was the loss of his left arm following an Allied bombing. Subsequently, Mizuki was transferred to a camp in Namale, where wounded soldiers were placed on light duties. There, Mizuki heard a story from a medic who had traded his army-issue goods with villagers for food. This piqued his curiosity. One day, Mizuki slipped out of the camp and headed for Namale. Upon approach, Mizuki exchanged eye contact with a villager and the two men shared an awkward smile. He took the smile as an invitation and walked into the village. The villagers were having lunch and offered him food. Mizuki was so pleased that he devoured everything, even the portions intended for other villagers. He returned another day and brought army-issued cigarettes and blankets to recompense the villagers for the lunch. In turn, he received more food. Mizuki was indebted to the villagers' largesse for restoring his health; meanwhile soldiers who did not barter with villagers wilted away (see figure 2).⁶ What awaited Mizuki back at the camp after each visit to Namale was a round of *binta* (hard slapping across the face) from his superiors for violating the prohibition on fraternizing with the locals. Mizuki remained undeterred and continued to visit Namale to make friends with the villagers. Among them was ToPetro, who brought food to Mizuki at his army camp, and with whom

⁶ Mizuki 1994b (1989), p. 27; Mizuki 2004b (2001), p. 284. Mizuki recalls that he was able to trade more in food than other soldiers because, as a non-smoker, he had an abundance of cigarettes at his disposal. Mizuki 1994d, p. 31.

Mizuki developed an intimacy. Indeed, in his retelling of his Namale experience, Mizuki amplifies the kindness of the villagers who helped him to recover the humanity that military life had destroyed. Mizuki's appreciation of the villagers inverted the common assumption inherent in Japanese imperialism of the civilized Japanese and the uncivilized islanders.⁷

Mizuki claimed that the villagers appreciated the fact that his interest in them surpassed the barter and that he acted without any sign of the racism of other Japanese soldiers. It seems that Mizuki earned the villagers' trust. They gave him the nickname Paulo, adopted him as a *kandere* (a matrilineal family member) and gave him shell money, of significant symbolic value in New Britain. Furthermore, he believed that the villagers took pity on him because he had lost his left arm.⁸ However, in one prose essay, *Neboke jinsei* ねぼけ人生 (My Sleepy Life, 1982), Mizuki expresses the suspicion that the villagers befriended him so that he might mediate on their behalf when disputes with other Japanese soldiers came to a head. Such disputes, usually about the theft of potatoes from the villagers' plots, arose after soldiers learned of his friendship with the villagers. Mizuki recalls that the task of mediation put him between a rock and a hard place.⁹ Indeed, historian Iwamoto Hiromitsu 岩本洋光 attests to the inevitably strained relationship between the Japanese military and the people of New Britain. Initially, the Japanese tried to build a cordial relationship by cultivating patronage and fostering loyalty. As the war progressed and Japanese supplies ran low, however, they turned to coercion, torture, and execution to extract food and labor from the villagers.¹⁰

Following the Japanese surrender, Mizuki announced to the villagers his transfer to a prisoner of war camp away from Namale. The news saddened the villagers, who encouraged him to remain and promised him a house and a vegetable plot. Mizuki even told his superiors of his intention to remain but he changed his mind after an army surgeon persuaded him to seek appropriate medical treatment in Japan for the wound from the severing of his left arm. Mizuki promised the villagers that he would return in seven years. In manga, Mizuki repeatedly drew images of himself and the villagers looking tearful as they shook hands, with the Japanese soldiers behind them unable to fathom their sadness.¹¹

Mizuki's tears speak of the dilemma he faced in choosing between the village and his long-held ambition to become a painter back in Japan. Only in *Neboke jinsei* does Mizuki admit that he had harbored doubts about fully "going native." No matter how much he enjoyed the company of the islanders, he still perceived himself as being civilized and the villagers as being uncivilized, and he looked forward to his eventual repatriation.¹² His later narratives give different reasons for his repatriation to Japan. In his prose-and-manga essay *Karan koron hyōbakuki* カランコロン漂泊記 (The Diary of a Drifting Life, 2000) and a three-volume manga autobiography, *Kanzenban Mizuki Shigeru den* 完全版水木しげるの伝 (The Complete Autobiography of Mizuki Shigeru, 2001), he inserts a flashback of an accidental encounter with EPupe. EPupe was a woman to whom Mizuki was deeply attracted, but he relinquished thoughts of romance when he learned that she was married. While walking to

7 Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 126.

8 Iwamoto 2006, p. 80.

9 Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 118.

10 Iwamoto 2011, pp. 14 and 22–23.

11 Mizuki 1994b (1989), vol. 6, p. 94; Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 120; Mizuki 2004b (2001), pp. 338–40, 346.

12 Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 118.

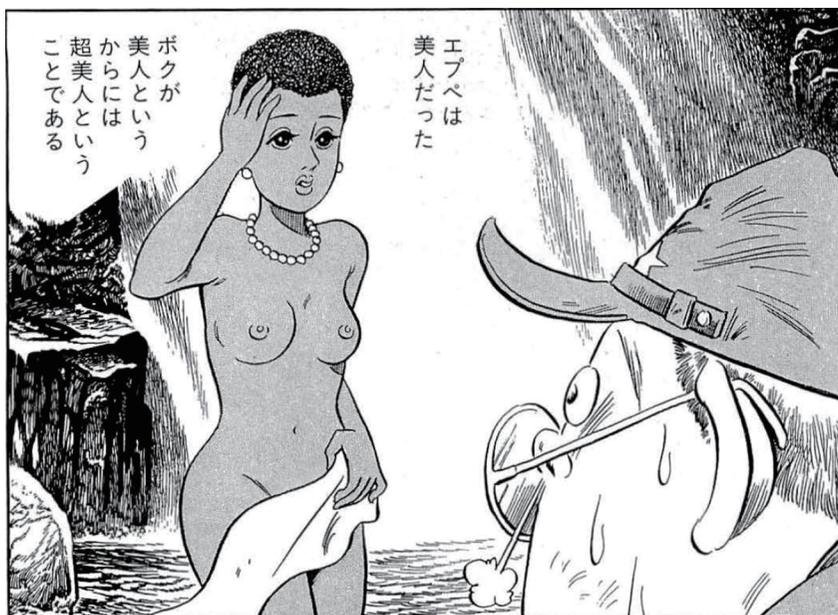


Figure 3. Mizuki encounters EPupe at a waterfall. Image reproduced from Mizuki 2004b (2001), p. 342. Mizuki writes, “Epupe was a beautiful lady. If I say so, she must have been extremely beautiful.”

Namale to announce his departure, he sees EPupe naked and bathing at a waterfall. Mizuki recalls that she smiled and he suspects this is an invitation to have sexual intercourse with her. Mizuki regrets walking away from a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but he admits his concern about contracting a sexually transmitted disease. He also wonders whether he can become a manga artist if he fathers a “mixed-blood child” (see figure 3).¹³

His anxieties epitomize the essence of Nanyō-Orientalism. EPupe represents irresistible temptation, yet poses the risk of disease and entrapment, emotional or otherwise, which could result from the potential birth of an unwanted child. His ambition to become an artist no doubt gives him further reason for resisting the opportunity to establish a relationship with this woman.¹⁴ The farewell scene, which he went on to relate many more times, makes a poignant tale. Mizuki seems to imply that he made the best of his difficult life as a conscript and achieved self-actualization through friendship with the villagers. For better or worse, the Japanese defeat was to bring an end to both his miserable and happy times in New Britain. This is a plausible enough response to Mizuki’s writing from readers who do not know his reasons for returning to Japan. Nonetheless, a reader aware of these motivations may of course form different interpretations. The reader may well suspect that his tears represent not just the sorrow of departure but also the anxiety of adjusting back into Japanese society in the aftermath of defeat.

¹³ Mizuki 2004b (2001), p. 342; Mizuki 2000, p. 138.

¹⁴ Mizuki drew sketches during the war and kept them, which suggests his ambition was more than an adolescent fad. Mizuki 1994d; Mizuki and Aramata 2015, p. 31.

Paradise Revisited

Mizuki's accounts of his visits to New Britain Island in the 1970s and 1980s register an ambivalent tone. Mizuki returned to the village of Namale in December 1970 for the first time since the wartime period; his time away lasted significantly longer than the seven years he had initially promised the villagers.¹⁵ He hoped to find it the same as when he left in 1945. Instead, he saw deterioration in the standard of living and changes in the mentality of the villagers. His unfulfilled nostalgia exemplifies what travel writing scholars call "belated arrival." It refers to occasions when a traveler has failed to fulfill the hope of experiencing authentic culture because it is disappearing, or has already vanished, as a result of foreign intrusion. Consequently, the traveler's disappointment develops into a wistful and apologetic sentiment, and a lament for the corrosive effects of foreign influences on the local culture, even where the traveler's own nation is responsible.¹⁶

Mizuki repeatedly explains that it took him so long to visit Namale because he struggled to establish his career and to attain financial security after repatriation. By the mid-1960s, he had become a critically acclaimed manga artist but the demands of work and fame afflicted him with self-diagnosed *nanpōbyō*. He saw himself as a tormented misfit soul in postwar Japan, and identified with Robert Louis Stevenson, Paul Gauguin, and Hijikata Hisakatsu 土方久巧, all of whom made the Pacific Islands their adopted home.¹⁷ What made Mizuki's return journey finally possible was a chance encounter with Sergeant Miya, a former military superior and fellow sufferer of *nanpōbyō*. Miya asked Mizuki to accompany him and Ishibashi, another veteran, to commemorate their comrades who had died in New Britain.¹⁸ Toward the end of this journey, Mizuki split from his companions to look for the Namale villagers; he hired a local driver and managed to locate the village after a few hours. By the 1970s, ToPetro had become a village headman with a family, and he hosted Mizuki as a guest. Mizuki also met EPupe and found that she had lost her beauty but retained her graceful manners. She had remarried after her first husband died of illness and was busy looking after a sickly child. Mizuki spent one night with the villagers and returned to Japan.¹⁹

The first comment he made regarding his December 1970 journey appeared in an interview with *Asahi shinbun* in September 1973, a month after the publication of his semi-autobiographical manga, *Sōin gyokusai seyo* 総員玉砕せよ.²⁰ In the interview, he declares his pleasure at having reacquainted himself with the people and the landscape but laments the intrusion of "civilization" that continued to undermine the Namale villagers' lifestyle. Mizuki recognizes that Namale has become more like Japan: the cash economy

15 Zack Davisson's English translation (2015, p. 246) notes the date as November 1970, whereas the Japanese original gives December.

16 Holland and Huggan 2000, pp. 22–23 and 95–96.

17 Mizuki 1994c (1989), p. 156; Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 243; Mizuki 2005 (2001), pp. 167 and 240–42. Hijikata Hisakatsu (1900–1977) was the sculptor who became an amateur folklorist documenting the lives of Palauan people. He returned to Japan in 1942.

18 Mizuki 1994c (1989), pp. 112–13 and 138; Mizuki 1995 (1985), pp. 222–23; Mizuki 1999 (1982), pp. 233–35.

19 Mizuki did not always state precise chronological details of his journeys.

20 This has been translated into English as *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* (Drawn and Quarterly, 2011) translated by Joycelyn Allen.

had damaged the carefree lifestyle in which villagers used to “eat, sleep and dance.”²¹ Mizuki attributes those adverse effects to Japanese businesses “selling goods, felling trees and scattering the poison of civilization.”²² Furthermore, he subverts the term *dojin* 土人 (indigenous people), a term now deemed to be highly offensive, to praise the villagers’ harmonious relationship with nature. He understands the villagers’ lifestyle as one of living off the land without having to work too long, and believes that *dojin*, in its literal meaning of “people of the earth,” aptly describes their customs and underlying principles.²³ Later, in *Neboke jinsei*, Mizuki again criticizes the social ills of the Japanese high-growth economy:

The only place in Japan that people can relax is the coffin. As long as you are alive [in Japan], you remain anxious and busy. The natives often remind me the Japanese work too much. They have a point. In their view, happy people are the people who do not work. So, the Japanese are unhappy. I work so hard and don’t like the cold. I don’t really like working, and want to lead a relaxed life. My personality makes me want to get out to the South.²⁴

Mizuki’s enduring respect for the villagers explains why the heaven-and-hell motif of his wartime writing resurfaces in his postwar travelogues. It resonates with anthropologist Marshall Sahlins’ notion of the original affluent society. Sahlins argues for a reappraisal of the hunter-gatherer society as a civilization on its own merit and dismisses its treatment as being inferior to the industrialized society.²⁵ Mizuki’s tenderness toward the villagers amplifies his criticism of Japan’s industrial prowess, which diminished the pleasure of his return to the village and even deprived the villagers of their own civilization.

Mizuki’s praise of the villagers following this December 1970 visit was not as emphatic as that during the wartime. Indeed, his descriptions of the food and accommodation show signs that his rose-tinted view was fading. In one incident, ToPetro offers Mizuki a meal of large potatoes boiled in fatty water because ToPetro remembers that Mizuki has a hearty appetite. Mizuki finds the potatoes so bland that he hides them from the villagers’ sight and gets up at night to throw them out into the bush. As he begins walking, he feels human flesh under his feet. He sees a dozen people sleeping on the floor, including a villager with rat feces in his open mouth. The sight shocks him, even as it makes him admire the villagers’ ability to sleep in rough conditions and to coexist with nature.²⁶ At breakfast the next morning, Mizuki sips strange-tasting instant coffee made by ToPetro. When he finishes it, he notices mosquito larvae at the bottom of the mug. He then accepts that the larvae-filled water is normal. On following days and in subsequent trips over the years, he continues to drink the larvae-filled coffee that ToPetro makes.²⁷ Trumpeting his willingness to tolerate discomfort is a technique that perhaps elevates his self-image as an intrepid and adaptable

21 *Asahi shinbun* 1973, p. 13.

22 *Asahi shinbun* 1973, p. 13.

23 Mizuki 1995 (1985), p. 193; Mizuki 1999 (1982), pp. 111–12 and 240; Mizuki 2000, p. 192; Mizuki 2002 (1995), pp. 30 and 44.

24 Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 233.

25 Sahlins 1972, pp. 32–39.

26 Mizuki 2000, p. 239; Mizuki 2005 (2001), p. 152.

27 Mizuki 1995 (1985), pp. 234 and 239; Mizuki 2000, p. 238; Mizuki 2005 (2001), pp. 151 and 154.

traveler. It enables Mizuki to claim that he returned to the village as a *kandere* who shares a significant bond with the villagers, not as a foreign traveler who only experiences the ever-widening gap in living standards between Japan and Namale.

A more crucial difference in Mizuki's account of his return visit concerns values. During the war, he was content to share his time with the villagers and absorb their culture. In *Mizuki Shigeru no musume ni kataru otōsan no senki* 水木しげるの娘に語るお父さんの戦記 (Dad's Wartime Memoir; hereafter *Musume*) published in 1985, Mizuki tells his daughters that he struggled on his return in 1970 to sustain conversations with the villagers. With his limited Pidgin and English, he shows the villagers his manga books and explains how he makes a living as a manga artist. Mizuki sees the villagers' clumsy handling of his books and blank responses to the description of his work. He quickly deduces that books and his profession are foreign to the villagers; he realizes that they and he had grown apart. Recognition of the distance makes Mizuki nostalgic for an untainted primitive culture that he can no longer find. In brief, it is clear that by his own account, Mizuki's first return journey left him with a bittersweet aftertaste. Yet he still fantasized about relocating to Namale with his family. Hoping perhaps to convince his family to emigrate, he reasoned that the clean air made everyone equal, and the simple living was worry-free.²⁸

Six years later, in 1976, Mizuki paid another visit to Namale. He recounts this journey in great detail in a chapter entitled "Ushinawareta rakuen" 失われた楽園 (Lost Paradise) in *Neboke jinsei*. On this occasion, he finds that staying in the village has now become awkward for him. He sees drastic changes to the landscape: tar-sealed roads have replaced dirt roads; boats now have motors; and general provision shops are dotted along the roads. Time-honored lifestyles and values among the Namale have changed. What disturbs him most is the villagers' loss of free time as cash crop farming has replaced subsistence farming. Mizuki notices that ToPetro works long hours, husking coconuts for the paltry price of ¥6,000 for 40 kilograms. He can no longer relax in the village as he feels obliged to help ToPetro with his work.²⁹ The impressions he forms on this 1976 trip remain in his final autobiography, published in 2008. Here, Mizuki describes the shift in the villagers' lifestyle. Instead of living off the land, they have instead started buying canned food and importing rice from the money they earn from selling copra. Mizuki originally traveled there to escape the pressure of work in Japan but he witnesses the fact that the villagers have also now come under pressure to work. The situation leaves him wondering if this is the end of paradise.³⁰ His sentiments highlight the paradox of Nanyō-Orientalism, for his intended sympathy results in reifying the villagers in the past. His disillusionment turns him into a melancholic traveler caught between two conflicting impulses. He perceives that he arrived too late to wallow in nostalgia, but he cannot completely accept the reality that modernization has changed the village and the people for good.

Amid his mounting frustration on this 1976 trip, Mizuki vents his growing antipathy toward the Namale villagers. On one occasion, ToPetro's brothers offer him chickens, a much-valued food item in the village. The brothers then abruptly request that he invest in

28 Mizuki 1995 (1985), pp. 236–37 and 244.

29 Mizuki 1999 (1982), pp. 245–46. Ethnographic accounts by academic anthropologists testify to the spread of commercial farming in the Gazelle Peninsula, which triggered changes to lifestyle and underlying values. See, for instance, Epstein 1969, p. 308.

30 Mizuki 2008, pp. 240–41.

YEAR PUBLISHED/ MEDIUM/TARGET AUDIENCE	ROLE OF TRUCK	EFFECTS/SYMBOLISM INTERPRETATIONS
1989 and 2001/ Graphic novel/ Popular audience	Repayment for past generosity	End of Showa era, and friendship with ToPetro
1991/Graphic novel/ Juvenile audience	Compensation for Japan's past atrocities	Necessary compensation Reconfirms special friendship
1995/Prose essay/ Adult readership	Payment for house	Reconciles embarrassment; guilt Regrets not breaking off sooner

Figure 4. Mizuki's narratives of the gifting of the pick-up truck.

a local cocoa factory and donate a farm vehicle. Mizuki finds them brazen and annoying.³¹ Arguably, he is most disappointed in the “Lost Paradise” as it relates to EPupe. On one occasion, when Mizuki gives her a wristwatch, she retorts, “I would have preferred a radio.” However, she continues to play the good host and serves him a meal of chicken. Afterward, she demands of him a beautiful *laplap* (a sarong-like cloth) as payment for the meal. Mizuki writes that EPupe has turned into “a greedy old hag.”³² What emerges from a comparison between his accounts of his 1970 and 1976 trips is a shift in Mizuki’s perception of Namale and its villagers. The former leaves Mizuki ambivalent about the gap between the village as he remembered it from the wartime and what he saw on his journey of 1970. The latter confronts him with the unpleasant reality of profound changes to the villagers themselves. Their responses to Mizuki suggest that his novelty as a long-lost friend had worn off by 1976. The villagers had come to see him more as a paying guest from an affluent country. His irritation indicates a creeping hubris: he had assumed that the villagers would always offer unconditional hospitality as they had during the wartime period.

It is clear from his assorted writings, notably in *Neboke jinsei* (1982) and *Musume* (1985), that the more Mizuki tries to cure his *nanpōbyō*, the more he has to tolerate the unsavory realities of contemporary Namale. Indeed, these two books reveal that he has abandoned his ambition to relocate to Namale permanently; he is now resolved to return only for short-term visits to draw artistic inspiration, and to reminisce about the past. He has lost his desire to engage with the villagers.³³

Mizuki’s Gift in Three Narratives

Mizuki’s attitude to Namale evolves further on a trip he made after Emperor Hirohito’s death, which occurred in January 1989. On this occasion, he donates a pick-up truck to ToPetro. In manga and the prose essays, he explains the reasons for this largesse in three

31 Mizuki 1999 (1982), pp. 245–46.

32 Mizuki 1999 (1982), p. 246.

33 Mizuki 1995 (1985), pp. 248–50; Mizuki 1999 (1982), pp. 247–48.



Figure 5. Mizuki reflects on the significance of the death of Emperor Hirohito. Image reproduced from Mizuki 1994c (1989), pp. 248–49.

distinct versions (see figure 4). The emphases vary, but each version notes the impact of Emperor Hirohito's death on Mizuki's perception of his relationship with his wartime past and with the villagers. The first narrative appears in *Komikku Shōwa-shi 8 コミック昭和史8* (Manga History of Showa 8, 1989), the final volume of a manga series that intertwines a history of the Showa era with Mizuki's autobiography. This first narrative appears unaltered in a subsequent manga autobiography published in 2001. In the first narrative, Mizuki devotes four half-page frames to his reaction to Hirohito's death. These four frames are the longest first-person commentary passages in the book, and precede the gifting of the truck:

Frame 1 (top right): As we went from the Shōwa to Heisei periods, somehow my mind became calm. I felt as if I were liberated from my pent-up anger.

Frame 2 (bottom right): During the war, everything was done in the name of the emperor. Soldiers got bullied in his name. So I had this anger I could not express.

Frame 3 (top left): I am sorry to say so, but for some reason or another I was getting angry at “the emperor” without conscious knowledge. Now, we no longer have him.

Frame 4 (bottom left): Ever since I was a child, I loathed having my freedom taken away. This is why my weird anger at the war was bound to be stronger than other people's... (figure 5)³⁴

34 Mizuki 1994c (1989), pp. 248–49; Mizuki 2005 (2001), pp. 277–78. The translation into English is my own. See also Davison's translation in Mizuki 2015, pp. 510–11.

Mizuki's frank admission of his long-held resentment toward the emperor and the release of this emotional burden on his death make for a rare moment in Mizuki's writing. His reference to the emperor particularly demonstrates his political color, which can only have earned him support from those critical of the emperor's role and stirred the ire of his defendants. The combination of his words and images carry the intensity of Mizuki's simmering anger. In the first frame, he announces with a pun that the new era Heisei 平成 has brought him *heisei* 平静 (equanimity).³⁵ Together with his acknowledgement of calmness in the new era, the first frame might signal the beginning of his healing from a deep-seated trauma, or at least his willingness to address the trauma. The contrast between Mizuki's styles of drawing is worth noting. Typically, Mizuki draws people with square-ish faces and a disproportionate head-to-body ratio against a naturalistic backdrop. Cartoon-like soldiers in frames 2 and 3 might be taken to reflect how military strategists saw soldiers. In frame 3, Mizuki features himself in the jungle, looking bewildered. The contrast between the realistically drawn jungle and the caricatured soldiers seems to convey Mizuki's resentment toward the strategists who treated soldiers as toy soldiers deployed without foresight. The realistically-drawn soldiers in frames 1 and 4 convey different messages. Frame 1 seems to accentuate the isolation of a lone soldier in the vastness of nature. In frame 4, the dead soldier draped over a tree is almost indistinguishable from his surroundings. The scene reminds us that over eighty percent of Japanese soldiers in Papua New Guinea died of causes that directly or indirectly resulted from starvation.

The first narrative in *Komikku Shōwa-shi* underscores Mizuki's departure from personal anger. ToPetro's reaction to the truck vindicates Mizuki's motivation in the reciprocating decades of friendship and in compensating for the inconvenience he has caused to the villagers. ToPetro is so happy to receive the truck that he invites Mizuki and the villagers to celebrate the gift. At the ceremony, ToPetro announces, "I am happy because what I did for him [Mizuki] came back."³⁶ This brief remark seems to have made a profound impression on Mizuki partly because he now knows ToPetro has dementia. The comment also spurs him on to speculate what ToPetro could have been thinking of ever since Mizuki began travelling back to Namale in the 1970s. To Mizuki, the remark suggests that ToPetro longed for Mizuki to recompense the decades of generosity with an item of value. Indeed, Mizuki's first narrative suggests that he believes he has fulfilled his side of the bargain as a true friend and an adopted member of the village. At the same time, ToPetro's comment humbles Mizuki because ToPetro's memory of friendship with Mizuki remains strong. Mizuki goes on to reiterate that he likes ToPetro even more for his modesty. Mizuki recalls that, unlike the other villagers, ToPetro has never asked for anything in return despite poverty besetting his family and Mizuki's repeated requests for local curios.³⁷ Mizuki in his first narrative gives ToPetro a rare voice that leads Mizuki to reassess their relationship. While the narrative bespeaks his renewed respect for ToPetro as an always obliging and loyal friend, it ends up silencing ToPetro's thoughts and feelings toward Mizuki.

35 The Heisei era began on 8 January 1989, with the new imperial reign that followed the death of Emperor Hirohito.

36 Mizuki 1994c (1989), p. 254; Mizuki 1994d, pp. 227–28; Mizuki 1995 (1985), p. 255; Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 162.

37 Mizuki 1994c (1989), p. 255; Mizuki 1994d, p. 228.



Figure 6. Mizuki (left) shakes hand with ToPetro (right) after presenting the truck. Mizuki then leaves the village. On the far left is Nezumi Otoko, a shadowy cynic appearing in Mizuki's famous *Gegege no Kitarō*. Image reproduced from Mizuki 1994c (1989), p. 256.

By the late 1980s, however, Mizuki had grown more appreciative of ToPetro's sentiments. He draws a scene in *Komikku Shōwa-shi* in which he and ToPetro are shaking hands in front of the vehicle surrounded by the villagers. ToPetro is portrayed as looking far away but apparently content; this perhaps is meant to hint at both ToPetro's dementia and at his good grace in accepting Mizuki's gift. By contrast, Mizuki looks as if he is pondering what ToPetro's comment means.³⁸ Mizuki is conscious of having ignored ToPetro's long-held wish for him to reciprocate his kindness. Mizuki's dilemma exemplifies a rare occurrence in travel writing whereby a long-term friendship tempers the power dynamics of the oft-ephemeral traveler-travelee relationship. The scene leaves the reader wondering whether Mizuki's belated gift is better than no gift (see figure 6).

Mizuki repeats this first narrative in two subsequent prose pieces, both of which appeared in 1995: one a new epilogue to *Musume*, which he wrote ten years after the original publication, and the other a retrospective essay on his friendship with ToPetro, *ToPetro to no gojū nen* トペトロとの50年 (Fifty Years with ToPetro, 1995; hereafter, *Gojū nen*). The year 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, prompted many Japanese people to take a renewed interest in how, and to what end, the war should and could be commemorated. A case in point was the heated debate in the Diet over the wording of

38 Mizuki 1994c (1989), p. 255; Mizuki 2005 (2001), p. 285.

Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's official apology for Japan's wartime atrocities.³⁹ Mizuki evidently took little notice of the debate but he seemed to have absorbed the zeitgeist in reinterpreting his relationship with the villagers. In both pieces, he reveals that he has never paid any cash to the villagers because he assumes that, living off the land, they need little else. He admits to giving small gifts such as transistor radios, hair gel, and eye drops as gestures of his appreciation and, indeed, payment for accommodation. However, he now realizes that he should have paid ToPetro for the accommodation at least, and he has been "a little stupid" for taking the villagers' generosity for granted.⁴⁰ His frank, if melodramatic, admission of hubris speaks of the belated realization of a major social *faux pas*.

It is no less intriguing that Mizuki's questioning here touches on a seminal issue of Nanyō-Orientalism: the imbalance of power between the impoverished villagers and himself as a moneyed traveler. On the one hand, Mizuki champions the villagers' carefree and innocent character and unassuming lifestyle, which he deploys as a counter to the prejudice the Japanese readers may have against the South Seas Islanders as "primitive" peoples. Nonetheless, Mizuki glosses over the more significant questions about how and why the villagers became so impoverished, and what his presence means to them. Mizuki's new sensibility resonates with postcolonial theory, that is, post-1960s English-speaking travel writing of the industrialized world. Debbie Lisle argues that writers from these metropolitan countries substitute an apolitical celebration of cultural diversity for the overtly racist idioms of imperialism when describing the former colonies. She finds it troubling that travel writers fail to ask themselves what their travel means to the continuing global inequality.⁴¹ Mizuki's reflection fits into Lisle's mold of the travel writer who fails to ask what his or her personal journey means for the relationship between Japan and Papua New Guinea, or more broadly, the Pacific Islands under Japanese colonization or wartime occupation.

While Mizuki repeats the first narrative of the truck as his gift to the villagers for their kindness to him, he creates a second narrative in his twenty-three-page manga essay *Sensō to Nihon* 戦争と日本 (War and Japan). It first appears in *Shōgaku rokunensei* 小学六年生, a monthly magazine aimed at sixth-grade children, in 1991. *Sensō to Nihon* follows the formula of *Komikku Shōwa-shi*. It interweaves the origins and the course of the Asia-Pacific War with Mizuki's personal experience as a conscript.⁴² As if responding to the growing public debate about Japanese atrocities, Mizuki draws the reader's attention to Japanese "inhuman actions" in Korea and to massacres by the Japanese of Chinese people. Mizuki's gifting of the truck appears in the final three pages of *Sensō to Nihon*. Foregrounding the truck story is a sequence in which Mizuki discusses the war with the villagers, one of whom comments that the Japanese executed a "Big Man," a prominent villager. Other villagers join in and volunteer similar episodes of the Japanese executing three "Big Men" for refusing to cooperate. Mizuki declares that this is the first time he has learned of the Japanese atrocities from the villagers directly. His late discovery of his complicity, however indirect and distant, makes him painfully aware of his ignorance and gives him a renewed appreciation of the villagers' kindness.⁴³

39 Hashimoto 2015, p. 57.

40 Mizuki 1995 (1985), pp. 260–61; Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 128.

41 Lisle 2006, pp. 15 and 256–66.

42 The English translation of this manga appears in Penney 2008.

43 Mizuki 1991, pp. 400–402.

Although Mizuki does not repeat this narrative elsewhere, *Sensō to Nihon* adds a new meaning to the gifting of the truck. He perhaps wants the reader to see the gift of the truck as his olive branch to atone for the atrocities that the Japanese troops committed. In the final four frames that follow, he reiterates the Japanese actions in Korea and China, and asserts that only when the Japanese express sincere contrition for these past events can they stand tall as world citizens.⁴⁴ Mizuki presents himself as having undergone a personal transformation from a soldier and veteran to a citizen and grassroots ambassador seeking reconciliation.

Mizuki's late discovery of the Japanese atrocities seems to have dovetailed with another discovery in the 1990s. In the 1995 epilogue to *Musume*, Mizuki writes about ToPetro chiding him for walking alone at night, because he fears there are villagers' intent on killing him. Mizuki now deduces that such a scenario was plausible because he knew that the Japanese had killed many Islanders.⁴⁵ Mizuki then refers to the episode in which he trod on villagers who were sleeping on the floor of his hut. In the 1995 epilogue and in *Mizuki Shigeru no Rabauru senki* 水木しげるのラバウル戦記 (Mizuki Shigeru's Rabaul War Memoir, 1994), Mizuki speculates that ToPetro sent the villagers to the hut to protect him from the men who still resent the Japanese. This new knowledge underscores Mizuki's ignorance of the wartime tension and makes him more appreciative of ToPetro's thoughtfulness.⁴⁶ At the same time, Mizuki is implying a gap in the villagers' perceptions of him. Older villagers, such as ToPetro and EPupe, remember him as a *kandere* from the wartime. On the other hand, others who did not know about Mizuki's wartime association perceive him merely as one of the Japanese perpetrators.

The storyline of the third narrative, as told in *Gojū nen*, is identical to the other two narratives. The difference is that the third narrative adds new reasons for his choice of gift and the timing of his gifting. In *Gojū nen* Mizuki returns to Namale in the late 1980s, where he finds out that ToPetro has built a house for him. This surprises and troubles Mizuki who wonders whether ToPetro intends this as Mizuki's final resting place.⁴⁷ The house makes Mizuki anxious about the letters that he has written to ToPetro over the years, which contained vague promises to return to the village. He has never informed ToPetro that he has in fact ruled out retiring to Namale. Mizuki suspects that ToPetro and his family believe that Mizuki holds a sincere desire to retire in Namale.⁴⁸ Mizuki informs the readers that he knows that ToPetro has wanted a pick-up truck for a long time; he leaves the reader to deduce that he hopes such a gift will be adequate compensation for the kindness received. The reader might be led to believe that ToPetro's death prompts Mizuki to reveal as much as he can in order to give closure to his friendship with ToPetro and the villagers.

Closing the Circle: ToPetro's Funeral

The donation of the truck turns out to be the last occasion where Mizuki sees ToPetro. In early 1992, Mizuki received letters from ToPetro's family that referenced ToPetro's sudden death and urged Mizuki to visit soon. He paid another visit in July. The villagers only

44 Mizuki 1991, p. 403.

45 Mizuki 1995 (1985), p. 258.

46 Mizuki 1995 (1985), p. 259; Mizuki 1994d, p. 227.

47 Mizuki 2002 (1995), pp. 157–58.

48 Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 159.



Figure 7. ToPetro speaks through Mizuki. From left to right: Paivu, Mizuki's Japanese companion, Mizuki, and ToPetro. Image reproduced from Mizuki 2005 (2001), p. 395.

informed him then that the funeral would be held two years later; they gave no explanation for the delay. Mizuki duly returned in July 1994 with his two daughters, a friend and two magazine editors, and sponsored the entire funeral for ToPetro. The funeral was another event that Mizuki narrated in different ways. His first narration appears in prose in 1995, and the second in manga form in 2001. Both accounts show Mizuki visiting the village in 1994 and agreeing to sponsor the funeral because the villagers are too poor to pay for it themselves. Mizuki's drawing of the funeral features lavish local dances and drumming, and ends with Mizuki distributing shell money to the villagers. The gist of both stories is that he has, by virtue of the gift, fulfilled his obligation to ToPetro and the villagers and redeemed his dignity amongst them.

Apart from these similarities, the two accounts give differing emphases. In the 1995 narrative, Mizuki depicts himself, in both words and images, as being immersed in the traditional funerary rites, relishing the happy memories of the wartime and his earlier postwar journeys.⁴⁹ He muses that the ideal humans are those who live in harmony with nature, and this makes him yearn for people like ToPetro.⁵⁰ The funeral is the final and official ceremony that enables Mizuki and the villagers to mourn. For Mizuki, the funeral represents the end of not just a friendship but also his admiration of the village customs and ethos that ToPetro embodied.

The second account Mizuki wrote in 2001 (*Kanzenban Mizuki Shigeru den: Ge* [vol. 3 of 3]), six years after the first, makes use of drawings to emphasize ToPetro's enduring spiritual presence. Throughout Mizuki's negotiation over the funeral arrangement with Mr. Paivu, the mayor of the Rabaul district that includes Namale, Mizuki features the ghost of ToPetro floating beside him as if nudging him into sponsorship of the funeral (see figure 7).⁵¹ Mizuki recalls the eerie sensation of "someone pulling him," which results in him sponsoring the funeral and paying ¥30,000 to each of about twenty family members

49 Mizuki 2002 (1995), pp. 184–86.

50 Mizuki 2002 (1995), pp. 190–91.

51 Mizuki 2005 (2001), pp. 395–96.

to perform traditional music and dance.⁵² In this 2001 narrative, Mizuki draws a scene following the funeral, in which Paivu tells him that the spirit of ToPetro is issuing orders. The drawing seems to validate the idea that Paivu's comment is not merely Mizuki's own imagination and emphasizes a supernatural bond between ToPetro and himself. The acknowledgement of this spiritual bond seems to foreshadow the end of Mizuki's physical journeys to New Britain. In 1995, Mizuki learned that a volcanic eruption in Rabaul destroyed and buried many villages in ashes. The news worried Mizuki but also caused him to conclude that his relationship with Namale had come to its natural conclusion.⁵³

It seems that ToPetro's death and the eruption prompted Mizuki to find new purposes in life. The 2001 narrative in *Kanzenban* indicates that from the late 1980s, Mizuki frequently traveled to destinations other than New Britain. ToPetro's funeral punctuated his travel, allowing him to ponder the impact of spiritual forces on the human subconscious, and led to later journeys to fulfill his curiosity in the world of *yōkai*.⁵⁴ In *Kanzenban*, Mizuki narrates all these journeys in quick succession with cursory descriptions, and this gives little impression of him having meaningful interactions or making lasting connections with his travelers. Nonetheless, the rapid pace of his journeys suggests his urgent desire to make the most of his remaining time and to find a new *raison d'être*. The 2001 narrative carries a certain poignancy that depicts Mizuki anew as a lost soul. No matter where he goes, no destination seems to provide an adequate substitute for Namale that could cure Mizuki's *nanpōbyō*. As we see in his disenchantment with postwar Namale, Mizuki gives up on looking for the "good old days" in Namale. He is still invested too much in the hope of finding the old Namale elsewhere in the world. This is the paradox of Nanyō-Orientalism that Mizuki's journeys to Namale manifest, and whose meanings Mizuki attempts to reconcile and resolve through his journeys and numerous writings.

Conclusion

In his manga and prose, Mizuki provides multiple renditions of his visits to Namale village from the wartime period through to the mid-1990s. What begin as tales of friendship acquire complex new layers of disillusionment, resolution, and closure. Nanyō-Orientalism is the framework in which Mizuki forms his interactions with and impressions of the New Guineans. For Mizuki, wartime Namale provides a heavenly respite from the vagaries of the war. In his postwar journeys, disillusionment with the present accentuate the pathos of belated return and the unsettling ambiguities arising from new traveler-travelee dynamics. Mizuki's growing disillusionment continues until the death of Emperor Hirohito. It forces Mizuki to confront his personal demons and reexamine his attitude to and relationship with the villagers.

In particular, Mizuki's multiple retellings of the gifting of the truck and ToPetro's funeral are attempts to tease out the meanings of his relationship with ToPetro, albeit on his terms. The three versions of the gifting of the truck and the two versions of the funeral show Mizuki trying to articulate the different motives and interpretations, which create a feedback loop on Mizuki's perceptions of the villagers, himself, the war, Japan, and Papua

52 Mizuki 2005 (2001), p. 397.

53 Mizuki 1995 (1985), p. 270; Mizuki 2002 (1995), p. 193; Mizuki 2008, p. 299.

54 Mizuki 2005 (2001), pp. 413-44.

New Guinea. The truck symbolizes for him national and personal reconciliation. The latter motivation seems salient as Mizuki grows more contrite about acting in bad faith with ToPetro. Likewise, Mizuki's two narratives of ToPetro's funeral communicate different messages to the reader. While the first conveys the self-centered motivation of the funeral, the second raises and accentuates Mizuki's spiritual sensitivity and connection to ToPetro.

At the heart of Mizuki's repeated and continual introspection is the residual influence of Nanyō-Orientalism. Over the years he became sensitive to the ambiguous tension between his naivety, his unfulfilled desire for the village, and his slow awareness of his hubris. Mizuki's belated appreciation of the villagers' plight and deep-seated wartime memory are not so much a failure on his part. Rather, his long-drawn inability to develop or express his empathy with the villagers could be considered to be a manifestation of his *nanpōbyō*. The severity of his wartime trauma and the rapid transformation of postwar Japan made him yearn for the bygone days of Namale. Mizuki's *nanpōbyō* holds him captive to his own obsession so much so that he is unable to accept the new realities as they are. It is hoped that future research will probe the finer aspects of Mizuki's travelogues, for such endeavors can only enrich the posthumous reappraisal of Mizuki as a veteran traveler to his erstwhile battle sites.

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