

# Cannibalism among Japanese Soldiers in Bukidnon, Philippines, 1945–47

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## Abstract

This paper examines why survival cannibalism occurred in Bukidnon, Philippines from 1945 to 1947 from the point of view of the Japanese. Utilizing contemporaneous sources such as the *Japanese War Crimes* and universal theories of cannibalism, the paper shows that starvation, malnutrition, and salt hunger impelled cannibalism. The paper questions the assumption that cannibalism during wartime is mere aggression, not for survival purposes.

Keywords: Cannibalism, World War II, Japanese soldiers, salt hunger, starvation.

## Introduction

THE ORIGIN OF THIS PAPER GOES BACK to the time when I was conducting a research on the “Yellow Peril” sponsored by the Sumitomo Foundation (2005–2006). One day, my research assistant brought me photocopies of World War II documents from the National Library on the occurrence of cannibalism in Bukidnon during the war. Although I knew they were irrelevant to the research, I gladly accepted them anyway. I was teaching history in the Division of Social Sciences at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna at the time. Unexpectedly, the Division sponsored a conference on the Japanese Occupation in the Philippines, and this gave me a reason to write on cannibalism based on the documents. My paper did not trigger any discussion in the conference, and my