

## RESEARCH & DEBATE

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### REFLECTING ON FUCHIDA, OR “A TALE OF THREE WHOPPERS”

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It is fitting that I first set pen to pixel for this article on 4 June 2009 (the sixty-seventh anniversary of the battle of Midway), because Midway will forever be tied to the name of Mitsuo Fuchida. As I write this, I confess to feeling a sense of ambivalence. It is true that in this article I hope to bury Fuchida, not to praise him. Yet it is equally true that as a student of the battle I would have loved to have had a beer with him, too. Fuchida was, by all accounts, lively, intelligent, and charismatic—qualities well reflected in his writing. Yet unlike, say, the case with a Civil War historian, the fact that there was at least some overlap in our lives (I was thirteen when Fuchida died in 1976) means that my fantasizing about knowing Fuchida is perhaps not completely far-fetched. So, while I am sure I would have asked him some rather pointed questions while hoisting that beer, I am equally certain that I would have had a wonderful time and would have been personally enriched by meeting him.

Sadly, however, this article has less to do with beer than with the use of personal accounts in the study of naval history, since it is doubtful that any one person has had a more deleterious long-term impact on the study of the Pacific War

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than Mitsuo Fuchida. Because of his misstatements, the American study of the Japanese side of such battles as Pearl Harbor and Midway (particularly the latter) was probably set back by decades. His untruths also demonstrate the tremendous power of self-serving ideas that may be wrong, but subtly support national self-images, particularly when carried forward by the mass media. This is a theme I will explore. I hope it will be instructive to other historians.

It was during the research for our book *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* that my coauthor, Anthony Tully, and I gradually became aware of Fuchida's half-truths. Our quest was not to discredit Fuchida or to malign any historian who used him as a source. Rather, we were motivated by curiosity, our great interest in the Japanese Imperial Navy, and our wish to learn the truth. However, during the process of building a new foundation for our Midway study, it became clear to us that an important part of the old foundation had to be destroyed, for the simple reason that it was rotten. Things might have ended there, had it not been for Fuchida's other misstatements regarding Pearl Harbor, as well as his later war activities. It was only in the past few years that I became aware that Fuchida's mistruths actually spanned the entire conflict. Likewise, I have been constantly questioned in the course of giving presentations on Midway as to what Fuchida's likely motivations were for his actions. This has led to considerable ruminating, and not a little scratching of my balding pate. This article will hopefully answer some of those questions.

The bottom line is that Fuchida was a complex individual with complex motivations. What is clear is that his impact on the history of the Pacific War has been enormously damaging, in that his elaborations have been parroted for years and handed down as truth on the big screen, on television, and in countless Internet chat rooms. What makes this even more surprising is that although Fuchida was not a high-ranking officer, he created and influenced more of the postwar history of the Pacific War than perhaps any admiral on either side of the conflict. Let us turn to the three whoppers.

The first of Fuchida's tall tales concerns the attack on Pearl Harbor, which might be called "The Tale of the Missing Tank-Farm Attack." Down through the years, Western writers have duly noted that the Japanese navy let slip a potentially crucial opportunity to cripple the U.S. fleet at the outset of hostilities. In the months leading up to the war, the U.S. Navy carefully amassed 4.5 million barrels of fuel oil at Pearl Harbor, reasoning correctly that it would be the lifeblood of any future naval war against Japan.<sup>1</sup> The oil was stored at the base's two tank-farm complexes, primarily in aboveground tanks.

On the morning of 7 December, Japan's carrier striking force, the Kidô Butai, struck Pearl Harbor. In the course of their two attack waves, the Japanese accomplished two important goals. First, they crushed American land-based airpower, destroying or damaging around 350 of the 400 American aircraft on Oahu. This essentially eliminated the ability of the Americans to strike back effectively against the Kidô Butai. Second, the Japanese sank or badly damaged the majority of the American battleships in the harbor, thereby accomplishing (or so they presumed) their overall goal of destroying the U.S. Pacific Fleet's striking power. Such a victory, it was felt, would give the Imperial Navy free rein in the Pacific to

drive into the southern resource areas of Malaya, Borneo, and Java. Thereupon, having accomplished these key goals, the Japanese task force came about and headed home, ending the attack. However, the controversy over whether the Japanese should have attempted a follow-up strike was already beginning.

As the overall tactical commander in the air, Mitsuo Fuchida loitered in the area to assess the damage that his forces had caused. In Gordon Prange's landmark *At Dawn We Slept*, Fuchida is quoted as making the claim that during his return to the carrier *Akagi* he "mentally earmarked for destruction the fuel-tank farms, the vast repair and maintenance facilities, and perhaps a ship or two bypassed that morning for priority targets."<sup>2</sup> Upon landing, he allegedly pressed vigorously for a follow-up attack aimed at these targets, becoming "bitter and angry" when Admiral Chūichi Nagumo instead turned for home.<sup>3</sup> This same scene was mirrored in the movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* thereby passing into the American collective memory.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it would appear that none of these events ever took place.

H. P. Willmott and his coauthors Tohmatsu Haruo and W. Spencer Johnson must be given credit for introducing these important clarifications into the Western literature. They noted in 2001 that the targeting priorities for the attack were as follows: land-based airpower; aircraft carriers; battleships, cruisers, and other warships; merchant shipping; port facilities; and land installations.<sup>5</sup> In other words, fuel tanks were at the very bottom of the list, and during the first two attack waves the Japanese had barely begun chewing their way into item number three on that list.

Despite postwar American incredulity, these targeting priorities made perfect sense in the context of the ultra-Mahanian Japanese fleet. Enemy combat assets were axiomatically more important than the logistical apparatus supporting those assets. Sea control devolved from sinking warships, not blowing up fuel tanks. While it is true that the Japanese were perhaps shortsighted in not having gauged the value of Pearl Harbor's fuel tanks and logistical facilities, they were also fighting a deliberately shortsighted war. If they could not bring the United States to the bargaining table in 1942, they were going to lose the war regardless. Yet there is little in the historical record on the American side to suggest that the immolation of Pearl's fuel stocks would have made the United States any more willing to bargain with the Japanese in the short term—the very nature of the initial assault precluded negotiation. All in all, it is clear that if a follow-on attack had been launched by the Japanese, it almost certainly would have been aimed at the large numbers of American cruisers, destroyers, and submarines left in the harbor.

With respect to Fuchida's tale, Willmott correctly points out, there was, first of all, no independent confirmation of Fuchida's claim that he had "earmarked"

logistical targets. Indeed, had he actually done so, this would have represented a complete renunciation of all his prior naval training and indoctrination. Second, Admiral Ryūmosuke Kusaka (Admiral Nagumo's chief of staff) made no mention of Fuchida's protestations in his own postwar account.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Kusaka states that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's alleged unhappiness over the result of the attacks, as well as condemnations from others regarding the failure to attack cruisers, other vessels, and the base's fuel tanks, were all criticisms heard later, nothing more than "afterthoughts of poor strategists."<sup>7</sup> Third, Commander Minoru Genda, the First Air Fleet's staff air officer, acknowledged in his own memoirs that he was aware of the *Tora! Tora! Tora!* scene but explicitly denied that such an incident had actually taken place or that any such proposal had been put forward by Fuchida.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Willmott notes that Fuchida had been interrogated in 1945 by the Americans and had been asked point-blank why there had been no follow-up attack at Pearl Harbor. Fuchida responded that at the time the extent of the degradation of American airpower on Oahu was unknown (and hence the potential threat to Japan's carriers was unknown) and that the destruction or damage to eight American battleships constituted success, as far as Combined Fleet was concerned. He made no mention of the fuel tanks.<sup>9</sup> Yet in 1963 he delivered an account to Prange that made himself appear a great deal more prescient than he apparently had been willing to reveal in 1945.

Interestingly, Fuchida's story continued morphing even after 1963. I was amused recently by a posting to an Internet group dedicated to the study of the battle of Midway. One of the group's members, a gentleman who knew many Midway participants personally, commented on the tank-farm oversight at Pearl Harbor as follows: "Over the years I got to know a retired captain who was aboard the USS *Enterprise* shortly after Midway. In his retirement years he became well acquainted with Reverend Fuchida. [Fuchida had become a Christian evangelist after the war.] [He] spent many hours with [Fuchida] and learned a lot that few were privileged to know. One of the things [he] learned is that the Japanese did not bomb the oil tanks because they planned to use them after they invaded Oahu."<sup>10</sup>

This is not the first time I have run across this particular spin on the oil tanks, and it is a truly incredible misstatement on Fuchida's part. John Stephan's well researched *Hawaii under the Rising Sun* makes it clear that during the decades leading up to the war the Japanese had intermittently mulled the notion of capturing Hawaii in the event of war. It is equally clear, though, that there were no concrete plans to this effect at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Such operations had been discussed during planning for the attack but rejected by Yamamoto as too risky.<sup>11</sup> It is unlikely that the Imperial Army would have agreed to such a gambit in any case, given its general disinclination for operations

outside of China and its keen awareness of the lack of available assault shipping. Finally, of course, even if there had been such plans on the grand strategic level, a mere air group commander like Fuchida almost certainly would not have been privy to their details on 7 December. Yet Fuchida's "privileged" statements to this retired American captain played nicely to the whole American psychology relating to this battle.

Being on the receiving end of extremely nasty surprises is the nature of war. Sometimes, though, the enemy overlooks a temporary weakness and does not inflict quite as awful a beating as it could have. Such was the case with the tank farms at Pearl. In such cases it is tempting—after the fact, and when the war is safely won—to call the enemy stupid for having overlooked the obvious. Had the Japanese actually attacked and destroyed these facilities, the more pointed question would have been why the tanks were devoid of antiaircraft defenses, nonhardened, and relatively undispersed? While many postwar commentators would have us believe that these tanks were the very key to victory or defeat in the Pacific, apparently no one on the American side recognized that fact before the attack either. Yet Fuchida provided his listeners with a plausible lie that made U.S. oversights seem unimportant while simultaneously making himself appear smarter and more privy to inside knowledge of Japanese strategic deliberations than he actually was.

Regarding the treatment of source material, Fuchida's first whopper illustrates an important point that my coauthor, Anthony Tully, has repeatedly emphasized—witnesses' first accounts are often their best accounts. These reports tend to be terser, less embellished, and more to the point. This is especially important to note here because within the next decade the voices of most of the World War II veterans, the men and women who have firsthand insight into that incredible era, will be gone. It seems clear that Fuchida's most reliable account regarding Pearl Harbor was the first one he gave to his interrogators in 1945. Intriguingly, the very mode of questioning used by them may well have given Fuchida the clue that the fuel tanks were of larger interest to the Americans. Certainly by 1963 his story had changed dramatically. Fuchida was never slow to detect the sort of tales his audiences liked to hear.

The second whopper might be called "The Tale of the Fallacious Five Minutes," as it has to do with the climactic American dive-bomber attack at Midway. This stunning attack caught the Japanese completely by surprise, crippling three of their four carriers and effectively deciding the battle in America's favor. The events leading up to this attack can be roughly summarized as follows. Prior to the battle, the Kidô Butai had been instructed by Admiral Yamamoto to keep half of its aircraft ready for an antiship strike in case an American fleet was present in the area. Several hours into the proceedings on the morning of 4 June,

however, Nagumo ordered those reserve aircraft rearmed with land-attack weapons to deliver a second blow against Midway. Barely half an hour later, one of the two American carrier task forces, under Admirals Frank Jack Fletcher and Raymond Spruance, was detected, whereupon the Japanese reserve force's armament was ordered switched back to antiship weapons. A series of American air attacks then occurred, which were roughly handled but managed to keep the Japanese off balance. By 1020 on the morning of 4 June, according to Fuchida, the Japanese were finally ready to counterattack the Americans. A famous passage in Fuchida's *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*, entitled "A Fateful Five Minutes," describes the scene as follows:

One after another, planes were hoisted from the hangar and quickly arranged on the flight deck. There was no time to lose. At 1020 Admiral Nagumo gave the order to launch when ready. On *Akagi's* flight deck all planes were in position with engines warming up. The big ship began turning into the wind. Within five minutes, all her planes would be launched. Five minutes! Who would have dreamed that the tide of battle would shift completely in that interval of time? . . . At 1024 the order to start launching came from the bridge by voicetube . . . and the first Zero fighter gathered speed and whizzed off the deck. At that instant a lookout screamed: "Hell-divers!" I looked up to see three black enemy planes plummeting toward our ship.<sup>12</sup>

This rendition of events—wherein Japanese carriers, their flight decks packed with attack aircraft just moments from takeoff, are caught at the last second and destroyed—has been echoed in every Western account of the battle since 1955, when Fuchida's book was first published in the United States. It is part of the common psyche concerning Midway, creating a mental image for every American who has ever studied the battle. Unfortunately, it is a mental image that is incorrect.

During the course of the morning's operations the Japanese carriers came under attack no fewer than five times by nine separate groups of American aircraft. Not surprisingly, Japanese flight decks were quite busy with combat air patrol (CAP) requirements. These activities, as well as the interspersed American attacks, made it nearly impossible for the reserve strike force to be readied on the Japanese flight decks—a process that took around forty-five minutes.<sup>13</sup> It was not until the publication of *Shattered Sword* that all these factors were brought together. In the course of our research, Tully and I were able to use the Japanese air group records for the carriers to show that the Japanese had been recovering CAP fighters aboard *Akagi* a mere fifteen minutes before it was bombed.<sup>14</sup> Recovering aircraft meant that its flight deck had to be empty aft, which in turn meant that there was no reserve strike force spotted. The official Japanese war history on the battle, *Senshi Sōsho*, explicitly states that at the time of the American attack there were no attack aircraft on the Japanese flight decks,

only combat air patrol fighters. Indeed, the Zero fighter whizzing off *Akagi*'s flight deck in Fuchida's dramatic passage can be shown in *Akagi*'s own air group records to have been a CAP fighter, sent aloft to foil the ongoing American air attacks. We even know the pilot's name.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Fuchida's entire rendition of the climax of the most important naval battle in American history was a lie. The Japanese were nowhere near ready to counterattack at this time. The truly stunning thing about this, however, is that it essentially paralyzed the American study of this pivotal battle for the better part of fifty years. Fuchida's tale was in English, while the operational records that belied it were in handwritten Japanese stored on microfilms. For this reason, American historians (perhaps not surprisingly) simply accepted Fuchida's account verbatim and declined to look further. It did not help matters that Fuchida had become great friends with Gordon Prange, whose best-selling *Miracle at Midway* (1983) became, hands down, the most important English-language account of the battle, one whose details were subsequently incorporated into many other Western histories. Intriguingly, Fuchida's reputation as a reliable witness was demolished in Japan as soon as the *Senshi Sōsho* volume on the battle came out in 1971. Again, because of the difficulty of the source materials, most American historians were not even aware of the value of *Senshi Sōsho*, let alone what it said about Midway in particular, until around the turn of the twenty-first century.

I am convinced that one reason why Fuchida's tale endured in American literature is that it tapped into an underlying national self-image that we Americans have of the battle. Americans have always identified with tales of plucky underdogs prevailing against the odds. The story that Fuchida fed us was oriented along those lines. With such a "reliable" witness providing ready-made images for any screenplay, why would anyone think to look further into the (incredibly difficult and tedious) Japanese sources? At the same time, Fuchida subtly shifted the causes for Japan's defeat away from individuals and more toward what might be termed a "fates of war" explanation, which is more acceptable to Japanese societal sensibilities. This made sense in a book written immediately after the conflict by a former Japanese naval officer trying to salvage some honor from the wreckage of both a career and a lost war. Indeed, Fuchida's motivations were probably along the same lines as those of individuals like Major General F. W. von Mellenthin, whose famous book *Panzer Battles* (1956), along with memoirs by other former Wehrmacht commanders, not only helped orient the terms of study of the eastern front along essentially German lines for the better part of fifty years but also implanted the myth of outsized German martial prowess that reverberates in some audiences to this day.

Fuchida's second whopper illustrates an important point in the use of sources—that operational records (dull as they are) form the bedrock of any



military historical account and must be given weight at least equal to that given individual observations. If individual observations provide the narrative material, operational records should provide the foundation for understanding the larger picture into which the narrative must fit. Had American historians had the good sense to use the Japanese operational records that were available to them as early as the 1960s, Fuchida's tales would never have been as pervasively accepted. Instead, his word was accepted essentially as holy writ until 2005.

Fuchida's third whopper is "The Tale of the Privileged Observer." In some ways it is the most egregious of the three, because unlike his tales from the Kidô Butai there were literally thousands of potential American witnesses to this particular story, who might have come forward to debunk it. Yet this particular whopper was the last of the three to be uncovered, having been exposed only in 2009. In 2008 I was a consultant to a writer working on a screenplay for a motion picture, a major portion of which deals with the life of Fuchida and his postwar conversion to Christianity. As part of that effort, I came across Fuchida's claim, made in Prange's *God's Samurai*, that he had attended the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay aboard the USS *Missouri*.<sup>16</sup> This statement triggered my by-now finely honed Fuchida radar. Why, I asked myself, would Fuchida have been aboard the *Missouri*? What possible business did he have there?

Fuchida's explanation was that he had been in charge of arranging transportation for the Japanese surrender delegation and had then been allowed to come aboard with a group of Japanese army and navy liaison officers to observe the proceedings from a perch in *Missouri*'s superstructure. This flew in the face of common sense. The photographic evidence of the ceremony makes two things quite clear. First, except for the honored Allied dignitaries whose direct participation was required, this was an almost exclusively U.S. Navy affair. Second, it was standing room only, with *Missouri*'s sailors jammed into every available space to observe the proceedings. What possible motivation would any American sailor have had to offer up his perch on this grand event (one that he had left home and family for to fight for months or years) to some unknown Japanese officer who happened to show up at the last minute? Likewise, why would anyone have allowed someone like Fuchida, presumably in the company of other Japanese military officers, to wander into the command spaces of the flagship of the U.S. fleet? If he was there, why were there no photographs of him or the rest of the liaison party, when we have numerous photographs of the surrender delegation coming aboard? The more I thought about it, the more I came to believe that no other Japanese besides the surrender delegation could have been there.

However, it turns out I was wrong. While looking over some of the photographs of the event, an image surfaced of someone who was clearly a Japanese male, dressed in tropical military garb and sporting a camera, who was not a



member of the surrender delegation. The acquaintance who uncovered this image argued that since we now had photos of at least one Japanese outside the delegation, perhaps Fuchida could have been there as well. This, in turn, raised the ugly prospect of having to try to identify every face in every photograph of the ceremony to prove that Fuchida was not there, when in all fairness the onus should have been on Fuchida to prove his rather incredible attendance claim.

Salvation in this case was provided by Martin Bennett, the screenwriter, who very sensibly wrote to the Battleship Missouri Memorial on the matter. Michael Weidenbach, the museum's curator, returned the following testament of the *Missouri's* commander, Stuart Murray, that not only verified Fuchida's absence but also provided the identity of the unknown Japanese in the photographs. Captain Murray noted,

The Japanese were allowed to have a newsreel photographer. My recollection is only one, but there might have been two. But my orders since they only had the limited number, he was assigned a position on the 40mm gun platform on the starboard wing of the verandah deck [*sic*]. Two Marines had been assigned him to keep an eye on him because I felt there was a possibility he might try to pull a fancy trick with his camera or something and be a hero or a kamikaze by taking with him some of the central people. So these two Marines each had a hand on his leg and put him in his place and told him to stay there. . . . [T]hey had their other hand on the butt of their Colt .45. . . . [T]here was no question that [he] got the word.<sup>17</sup>

Captain Murray's account also makes it clear that security aboard the ship—even for Allied guests—was very tight, reflecting (in the words of historian Alan Zimm) the Navy's "corporate culture" for handling such events, which emphasizes positive control and overorganization.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, during the ceremony itself, a Russian photographer who tried moving to a different position in order to get a better view was physically tackled by one of the Marine guards and escorted back to his appointed spot.<sup>19</sup> As Weidenbach pointed out, if Fuchida had been aboard the *Missouri* in any capacity whatsoever, "his presence would have been noted, and his placement would have been noted in the official records . . . and would have been strictly monitored and recorded."<sup>20</sup>

The lesson from the third whopper is yet another reminder (if any were needed) that proving a negative is oftentimes a lot harder than proving a positive. However, it is the historian's job to produce positive evidence to support the claims that are made by the participants in our narratives. In this case, the onus was on Fuchida to support his rather incredible claims. His story, while superficially plausible, failed when subjected to the weight of the other positive evidence we have on this highly documented ceremony. Despite the presence of literally thousands of Americans who might have seen him, photographed him, or recalled his presence, we still have nothing more than his word that he was

there. Thus, by any reasonable measure of proof, Fuchida was not aboard the USS *Missouri* for the ceremony.

The reader would be right to ask at this point: Why did Fuchida make this stuff up? What was the motivation? Here we must set aside strictly objective historical enquiry and venture into amateur psychology (a prospect that always makes me queasy). However, as someone who has “lived with” Fuchida now for a number of years I would make the following observations. A glimpse into the inner character of the man is revealed in the movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* for which both Prange and Fuchida were technical advisers. During one scene, near the beginning of the movie, Fuchida lands his plane on the carrier *Akagi*. Dismounting, he is immediately surrounded by other aviators. Fuchida tells them they’d better treat him well, because he is their new air group commander. Surprised by this news, one of the pilots asks how he rated another promotion. Fuchida responds, to the general hilarity of all assembled, “Well, exceptional people get exceptional treatment!” I believe this illustrates something central about the man. Fuchida considered himself exceptional. Above all else, he wanted to be perceived as being intelligent and insightful, and if that meant depicting himself as armed with wisdom that could only have been developed in hindsight, so be it.

After the war, Fuchida enjoyed the company of Americans, attending many Pearl Harbor and Midway events. Indeed, Fuchida may have been more popular in America than in Japan. Furthermore, by his conversion to Christianity and ordination, Fuchida was vested with the aura that we typically confer on all clergy. We are taught in Sunday school that priests do not lie, that their quests for higher truths compel them to convey mortal truths faithfully as well. These societal beliefs are particularly in evidence with members of the war generation. I have been called to task more than once by World War II veterans who express incredulity that a man of the cloth like Fuchida could have lied about his wartime experiences, despite the many sordid modern examples we have of clerical misadventures. Furthermore, in the eyes of veterans, Fuchida, despite being an enemy during the war years, was still (as Bill Mauldin put it) a member of “The Benevolent and Protective Brotherhood of Them What Has Been Shot At,” whereas historians of the postwar era are decidedly not.<sup>21</sup> Such beliefs are difficult to overturn.

Fuchida was hardly alone in having falsified the record, of course. Veterans of every war, either intentionally or unintentionally, have misrepresented the events they participated in, until the very term “war story” is interchangeable with a tale of dubious veracity. Any military historian who has interviewed veterans has learned to be cautious in accepting their narratives. Time, distance, and the stress of combat can all distort a participant’s recollection of events,

even setting aside the possibility of intentional misstatements. However, it is not often that a veteran has the chance to distort the history of the two most important battles of the Pacific War, throwing in the surrender ceremony for good measure. Nor do many veterans get to see their personal versions of history enshrined in not one but two major motion pictures (*Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Midway*), thereby ensuring that their distortions will be incorporated into the common wisdom of the most important conflict of the twentieth century. In this sense Fuchida was unique and his impact absolutely unprecedented.

How can historians prevent this? The great French historian Marc Bloch wrote in *The Historian's Craft* that “from the moment when we are no longer resigned to purely and simply recording the words of our witnesses . . . cross-examination becomes more necessary than ever. Indeed, it is the prime necessity of well-conducted historical research.”<sup>22</sup> Fuchida's fables are a reminder of what happens when this sort of basic “blocking and tackling” is neglected. Yet additional narrative accounts are not necessarily required for this cross-examination. In the case of *Midway*, it was not another person calling our attention to Fuchida's “fateful five minutes” invention by giving a contradicting report but rather ships' flight records, as well as a sufficiently detailed understanding of how Japanese flight deck operations were conducted, that led to the inevitable conclusion that Fuchida had not told the truth. Ships' logs, technical plans and diagrams, maps and geographic-information databases, weather reports, photographs, radio intercepts, personnel records, and military doctrinal tracts—all of these and more are sources that can be used to augment (and cross-check) narrative sources. The key to combating overreliance on a single source remains, as ever, the development of a portfolio of varied sources that can be compared to each other.

It is unlikely that Fuchida's legacy will be overturned any time soon, perhaps not even within my lifetime. Yet as Bloch said, “The knowledge of the past is something progressive which is constantly transforming and perfecting itself.”<sup>23</sup> Therein lies the promise of a brighter future. The fundamental goal of history rightly remains not the discrediting of Fuchida but rather the perfection of our collective knowledge about the events he witnessed. Pearl Harbor and *Midway* still deserve study and will receive the attention they rightly deserve. That attention, however, will be increasingly directed via an array of methodologies and sources, not just a simplistic compilation of narrative accounts whose wellspring is now quickly running dry. The legacy of this most profound and complex of wars deserves no less sophisticated and holistic a historical approach.

## NOTES

1. H. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Strategists, April 1942* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1982), p. 140.
2. Gordon Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), p. 541.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 542–47.
4. As a side note, another key scene from this movie, wherein Admiral Yamamoto delivers the famously prophetic line, “I fear we have wakened a sleeping giant,” appears to have been purely the concoction of a (very talented) Hollywood screenwriter. Again, by virtue of being part of a major motion picture, this scene has entered the layperson’s historical lexicon, even though Yamamoto apparently never uttered any such thing.
5. H. P. Willmott, Tohmatsu Haruo, and W. Spencer Johnson, *Pearl Harbor* (Havertown, Pa.: Casemate, 2001), p. 64.
6. Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, eds., *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (New York: Brassey’s, 1993), p. 162.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Willmott, Haruo, and Johnson, *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 156–57.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
10. Bill Vickrey, post to Battle of Midway Roundtable, 29 March 2009, [home.comcast.net/~r2russ/midway//Backissues/2009-14.htm](http://home.comcast.net/~r2russ/midway//Backissues/2009-14.htm).
11. John Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun: Japan’s Plans for Conquest after Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1984), pp. 82–83, 85.
12. Mitsuo Fuchida, with Masatake Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan* (Annapolis, Md.: Bluejacket, 1951), pp. 155–56.
13. Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2005), p. 230.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Gordon Prange, with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *God’s Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2003), pp. 174–75.
17. Capt. Stuart Murray, account, [www.ussmissouri.com/sea-stories-mo-captain](http://www.ussmissouri.com/sea-stories-mo-captain). The veranda deck is, in fact, precisely where the photographs of the event show this Japanese cameraman.
18. Alan Zimm to Parshall, 1 April 2009.
19. Murray account.
20. Michael Weidenbach, curator, Battleship Missouri Memorial, correspondence with Martin Bennett, 5 January 2009.
21. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (1945; repr. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), p. 100.
22. Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 64.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 58.