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# **Shooting and friendship over Japanese prisoners of war**

Differences between Featherston, New Zealand and Cowra, Australia  
in Japanese connections

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## Abstract

Japanese prisoners of war were interned in Featherston, New Zealand and in Cowra, Australia during the Asia-Pacific War. Because of cultural misunderstanding of military traditions, there were violent incidents between prisoners and guards. These were the Featherston Incident and the Cowra Breakout and each of these caused heavy casualties. Since the war, these tragedies have encouraged mutual understanding and then friendly relationships between Japan and Featherston, and Cowra. However, there is something different between Featherston and Cowra in terms of Japanese connections: While, it is said that Cowra is a symbol of peace between Japan and Australia, it is rarely heard that Featherston is that between Japan and New Zealand.

The researcher has had three questions since he visited Featherston in 2004 for the first time: What is the difference between Featherston and Cowra? What is the cause of the difference between them? How should friendship between Japan and Featherston develop in the future? These three questions were answered when similarities and differences between the two incidents were explored by literature analysis and ethnographic analysis. The most important difference is that while Japanese victims of the Featherston Incident were cremated, but their ashes are still missing, those of the Cowra Breakout were buried and their graves have been maintained with great respect.

The answer to the first question: Judging from the theory of the state of international exchange, the Japan-Featherston relationship is unique in that Featherston people have had a friendship with Japanese people through a Japanese choir, Chor-Farmer, whereas the Japan-Cowra relationship is a fraternal relationship that Japanese people and Cowra people have created. The answer to the second question: Japan-Cowra relationship was born from the fact that there were some who had something philanthropic in war memories, whereas Japan-Featherston relationship was influenced by that there were some who had ill-feeling toward the Japanese in war memories. The answer to the third question: Present unique friendships between Featherston people and Chor-Farmer representing the Japanese should be maintained in the future because that seems to be all Featherston people's wishes.

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