

## MODERN HISTORY

### Kokoda

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“Kokoda” is a campaign to stop Japanese invasion to Australia in late July 1942. The name of the campaign was named after a village in Papua New Guinea. In 2006, the film “Kokoda” was made to honour Australian soldiers and their contributions to the country. The film was directed by Alister Grierson, who also co-wrote the script of the film. When the directors make historical movies, they always try to make the movies based on the actual events, which are recorded in the history and try to present as realistic as possible the spirit of the campaign. Due to the fact that the historical movies are often uninspired in majority viewers’ opinions, the directors need to exaggerate or modify some details to bring entertainment to audiences. Therefore, it brings us an idea about the authenticity of stories, which is “For centuries, composers have shared stories of war with audience; these stories are not always factual in nature”.

There are a lot of aspects of war were described in the film, such as life of soldiers, the way of killing people. Some components of these aspects are not always true. We can take an example of numbers of soldiers joined in the campaign for each side. In the Kokoda movie, Australians faced ten thousand Japanese troops on the Kokoda Track and were outnumbered ten to one. In fact, there was no time during the campaign that Australian soldiers coped with ten thousand Japanese. The book “The Kokoda Campaign 1942: myth and reality” by Peter Williams tells us many different stories about the war. We can see the idea from people who actually joined the campaign, “Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner and Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Key, who were two battalion commanders and fought there, were convinced that the Japanese were “definitely in superior numbers”, but in fact about two thousand three hundred were engaged on each side.”(Peter Williams, page 62). On the other side, if we have a look at the perspective of Japan, they also record different thing about the numbers of soldiers joined the conflict. “Japanese records show the fact that the Australians were defeated on the Kokoda Track from July to September 1942 because they were greatly outnumbered is untrue. The Papuans and Australians were outnumbered by one and a half up to the first Kokoda. At Isurava, there was one Australian for each Japanese engaged”. (Peter Williams, page 233). The director made the big gap between the numbers of Australian soldiers and the Japanese to aim at expressing his patriotism. Overcoming the disadvantage about an inferior number, Australians, with their determination, defeated successfully Japanese, who at this time had known for years only victory. In the film, we can see there are some Papua New Guineans helped Australians by acting as guides and stretcher bearers in the tropical jungle. They were willing to help with a smiling face. In fact, “there were forty five thousand labourers in Papua New Guinea in 1942 while some labourers happily volunteered; most were conscripted from their local village.” (Peter Macinnis, page54). They carried wounded soldiers on stretchers up and down the track searching medical assistance. They became a welcome and important sight for the embattled Australian soldiers. Their assistance to the Australian troops was tireless and valuable.

Besides the differences, the Kokoda film still maintained the reality of the events. Australian soldiers suffered many difficulties to survive. The Japanese were not the only enemy that the Australians had to cope with. There were the jungle, the weather and disease. The weather was so hard to live. “The combination of heavy rain and volcanic soil meant mud was never far away”. (Peter Macinnis, page 90). The soldiers still needed to be always in alert in condition of wet clothes and the muddy land which made them so hard to move. “They survived in the one set of clothes and could rarely take off their boots to air their feet, which like the rest of their bodies, were constantly wet”. (Patrick Lindsay, page 49). Australian soldiers’ camouflage was so simple and hopelessly light-coloured in jungle with light green khaki, only shirts, shorts and boots, which afforded no protection for them in the jungle. (Peter Macinnis, 2007). There were hot, humid conditions in the valleys and freezing nights on the mountain tops. These conditions enabled many tropical diseases to sprout, such as malaria, dysentery and others. As we can see in the film, the track consisted of steep mountains, a variety of peaks and valleys to cross. To go along with muddy field, it created a very dangerous structure to get through and might be attacked by Japanese at any time. The construction of the Kokoda Track is another component that the composer did successfully portray.

The film Kokoda is a typical example about stories in the war. It was made a long time after the actual events occurred thus the precision of the stories in the film are not always at the highest level. Moreover, the purpose of a film is not only providing audience information but it also needs to bring entertainment to them. Therefore, throughout the Kokoda movie, we can prove the statement at the beginning is right: "For centuries, composers have shared stories of war with audience; these stories are not always factual in nature".

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### Books

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