Diary from Battlefront by an Artist-soldier: The Battlefield of Artist
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The artist-soldier is not an actual branch of military service. One soldier, however, never once forgot his passion for the artist profession during the entire time he spent at the battlefront, and, upon being called to serve in the action report squad on account of his skills, used what little time he was allowed between military duties to make sketches of people and of living conditions and landscapes at the battlefront. With great effort, he brought back from the war nearly eight hundred sketches and compiled the three-volume "North Manchuria War Diary", a private edition made simply by affixing the sketches to an album. This soldier was SAITO Chiyoo, a resident of Yonezawa City in Yamagata Prefecture.

Saito aspired to become an artist as a primary school student. The downfall of his family business prompted him to find work away from home at an early age and send money to his family and it was during this time that he learned painting. After enlisting in the army, Saito's skills as an artist were exploited through his service in the action report squad and he was highly regarded by the senior officers. His portraits ranged from those of fellow soldiers to those of comfort women made upon their request, and his sketches of children suffering from endemic diseases or of women addicted to opium reveal the artist's faith in human relationships and his sympathy for the lives of the ordinary people, as well as Saito's personal qualities and love of humanity. His landscapes and sketches of living conditions also serve as first-class material depicting the historical background of the time.

The "North Manchuria War Diary" does not have a wartime flavor to it. Instead, it is full of the scent of real flesh and blood and of human life. This paper presents a portrayal of a soldier at the battlefront along with the soldier's artistic works. In doing so, the paper, although reliant on an inadequate number of oral accounts, attempts to make known the story of this soldier who, despite the abnormal conditions which soldiers in the battlefields and battlefront experienced, maintained his sense of identity and self-possession and to illustrate the foundations for his strength of will as he adhered to his first passion to become an artist. Above all, it introduces Saito's case as an example of a soldier who did not lose his self-identity even under the abnormal conditions of war and hopes to trigger more discoveries of similar nature. Just like the farmer-soldiers who unfailingly expressed in their military mail correspondence concerns about agricultural affairs in addition to their concerns about their families' well being, the author of this paper would like to adopt as a topic for future study the significance of normality in abnormal times and the continuation and discontinuation of normality under abnormal conditions, together with consideration on the ideal state of humanity.