

Greetings

In 2009 I was a member of the Tenryu Village Board of Education. I was instructed by Mr. Itakura, then Superintendent of Education, to review all the cultural properties in the village, including those currently designated, and to reconsider whether or not they should be designated. I served as the secretariat of the committee and together with six experts from the village, we held meetings once a month. We reported the results of our three-year study, including a field survey, to the Director of Education.

In the process, we researched and examined numerous properties. Among them, we spent a long time discussing whether or not war memorials should be registered as village cultural properties; the cenotaph for many Chinese who were forcibly brought to Japan from mainland China during World War II and were forced to engage in hard labor and died as a result, and the cenotaph for many Allied soldiers who were captured as prisoners by the Japanese in the Philippines and brought to this area and died through forced labor.

In the process, I came across a report titled "Record of Chinese Forced Labor" published in 1945, the year after the war ended, in which the GHQ (General Headquarters, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) ordered the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct a survey of the 40,000 Chinese who were forcibly taken away by Japan. I was surprised at the contents of the report and learned about the tragic events of the time. The book taught me that there was a tragic history even in this village, and I understood the significance of these cenotaphs to pass on the events to future generations.

We agreed that these are major historical events that must be passed on to future generations. However, from the viewpoint of cultural property, we decided not to register the cenotaphs this time because of the question that remained; "Should we register evidence of tragic war-related events as a cultural property?".

However, what came up again and again in the discussion was the need to pass on to future generations the story of these tragic events. We all agreed that we must remember and convey the message of Ms. Li Dequan's "Permanent Peace" that is engraved on the back of the Chinese Cenotaph. I have excerpted the GHQ report, which in my opinion is difficult to read, and summarized in a more understandable way so it could be easily read by those who are interested in this event.

I was careful not to include my personal feelings, presenting the documents as they were and retaining the spellings of the names and proper nouns, even the difficult-to-read kanji characters.

Unaccustomed to working on a laptop, I struggled, especially when trying to type the Chinese names. There were many characters not included in the standard everyday kanji, and, not knowing the proper reading and unable to find the correct kanji by typing hiragana, I had to consult a kanji dictionary, and it often took many minutes just to type one character.

As I slowly slogged through the work, I often became exhausted and drowsy. But each time I did, I'd consider how the Chinese people whose names I am now typing were in no situation to say they were tired or sleepy at that time. They were forced to work at the riverbed, wearing just one or two thin layers of clothes in the middle of winter, and then I would continue my best to type out the documents. (However, I still took lots of breaks)

After collecting the SCAP documents, I looked through other books in the library such as *Village History*, *Records of the Life and Release of the POWs at Mitsushima POW Camp*, and *Digging a War*, and, with my new internet skills, I looked up topics related to forced labor, as well as various sources about the modern history of the Korean Peninsula and China with Japan and the tragedy of war.

Some of what I searched on the internet I printed out and used as documents.

The documents I assembled are quite tragic and shocking, and there are many parts that are hard to read, but I did not sugar-coat it, my thinking being that “this is the reality of war.”

In this way, I gathered these documents as a reference to tell about the tragic circumstances of war, and anyone who wishes to read about them can. Many people or even just one person can learn of the tragedies of war (hardship, sorrow, regret, pain, coldness, suffering, misery, rage, hate, cruelty, barbarity), and if I can make just one or two people hope for a world without war, that would be enough.

It’s not that I want everyone to become an anti-war activist, but I want you to feel and think about the misery of the victims of war, and then to feel the happiness and peace of today.

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