

The education of Korean children residing in Japan

From the history of Tenryu Village

Many Korean workers flowed into and resided in the local area from 1935 until Japan's defeat in WWII. They participated in construction of the Sanshin Railway (August 1929-1937), which started before the war, and later with the construction of the Hiraoka Dam.

Most of them were people who arrived in response to "recruitment" around the time of the construction of the Sanshin Railway and "government mediation" around the initial days of the Hiraoka Dam construction, and people who were abducted to the area under the name of "civil conscription."

The "recruitment" regards farmers from the Korean peninsula who were later called "free travelers." They lost their livelihoods after their land was taken up by the government due to the Land Survey Operation following the Japanese Annexation of Korea. Searching for work with their families, these farmers applied for recruitments that were issued to secure the labor force in Japan.

Their children transferred to nearby schools that were in the area of their posting.

- As of May 9, 1945, Hiraoka Elementary School had 90 children enrolled. Please note this figure does not include children that did not go to school and children that adopted Japanese names. There is no doubt that there were more children than the given figure in the Hiraoka District.

Not all Korean children were able to go to school; and even if they could, the lesson content was the same as that of Japanese children. They had to take classes in Japanese and study the Imperial Rescript on Education, and the children were also roped into labor service and practiced drill. Korean people who suffered by Japan’s annexation of Korea and being forcibly relocated had felt extreme anger, saying “Do my children have to become soldiers and go to battlefields for Japan (who did such terrible things)? Is there anything as ridiculous as this?”

This sentiment -- the sadness of not being able to send the children to school, and the anger of not being able to let them receive education as Koreans even if they were able to go -- led to the establishment of Mitsushima Korean School as a place to provide ethnic education immediately following the end in WWII.

Many Koreans returned to their motherland after the war, but on the other hand, there were a considerable number of people that chose to remain in Japan. That reason will be discussed later.

Koreans residing in the village				
December 1945	140 households	537 males	140 females	677 in total
August 1947		111 males	107 females	218 in total

In May 1946, Mitsushima Korean School was established and lead by the Hiraoka Branch of the Federation of Korean Residents in Japan (在日朝鮮人連盟平岡分会) with a mission in mind to give a Korean education to Korean children.

The school building was initially a rented private house, but afterward, a school building was constructed in front of the present government office building. The teachers were two adults that could somewhat read, and they taught 31 male and 34 female children.

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When the institution was just established, all of the children, without taking into account their age, were made to enter school as first-graders. This was to ensure students who never had an education with a Korean-based system could learn from the beginning.

In 1948, 355 Koreans were reported as residents presumably because the construction of the dam was restarting the following year. If we look at the breakdown, it is written that there were “167 students (higher education included).”

Reference “The Resolution Statement”

In the winter of 1947, Koreans that resided in the Shimoina District of Nagano Prefecture presented a written resolution to the Hiraoka Village Office.

Dear Village Chief of Hiraoka

Koreans living in Japan were either abducted through the violent means of “conscription” during the aggressive war carried out by the Japanese imperial government, or they were deprived of their means of livelihood due to inhuman oppression and exploitation, and were bought by the Japanese labor market when in search of a piece of bread. Therefore, these

Koreans have no foundation of living in their homeland.

Although the liberation we desperately dreamed about had come, this is why many Koreans remain in Japan without being able to return to our homeland to this day. The Japanese authorities should be entirely responsible for resolving the living problems of Koreans who remain in Japan.

However, to date, the Japanese authorities have not implemented nor tried to implement any measures towards the Koreans.

That is not the only problem.

We put the past behind us, and work hard to establish a close and cooperative relationship between the Korean and Japanese people, hoping to serve as a bridge between the two groups. The Japanese authorities, however, interfere with our endeavors, scheme to shift the responsibility of inflation and maladministration onto us, and foment conflicts by driving a wedge between the two ethnic groups.

IE: the illegal suppression towards us which has become prominent recently, and the fact that colonial government officials and war criminals who returned from Korea have secured employment at police stations, Public Prosecutor's Office, and courts, and blatantly use violent language filled with hostility, humiliation, continuous prejudice in the past on us, are such examples.

We, the Korean people, feel an unbridled fury towards the leaders of Japan who have never reflected on their inhuman conducts that, for a long time, caused the suffering of the Korean people. They sabotaged the implementation of the Potsdam Declaration, envied the occupying authorities' favor of Koreans, despised us, lamented and regretted the liberation of Korean

people, and even wanted revenge on us.

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In light of the above-mentioned circumstances, we determine the following clauses and expect them to be accomplished.

1. Cooperate with our works to create wellbeing in a joint effort with the Japanese people and to establish world peace and democracy.
2. Stop interfering and suppressing the Korean people.
3. Discuss specific measures to help the lives of the Korean people.
4. Treat Koreans the same way as general returnees.
5. Provide work for Koreans.
6. Immediately dismiss government officials with war criminal history who withdrew from the former colony (colonies) .

December 7th, 1947

Residing in Shimoina District, Nagano Prefecture

Assembly for the Crisis-Relief of Korean's Livelihoods

Representative 方 太石

Even though they felt prejudiced, humiliated, and sometimes intervened, and oppressed; they had no choice but to enrich their lives in this area. That was exactly what was behind their strong motivation to prioritize building a place for education.

In the midst of their poverty, parents set up schools by themselves, and the children went there while suffering from hunger.

Their endeavors reflected an urgent sense of crisis: “if we do not educate them, the children will grow up uneducated and have painful experiences like us.” The Mitsushima Korean School at that time was the fruit of hardship and hope for the Koreans in Japan who wished to teach their native language and culture to the children.

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| May 1946 | Rented a private house to establish the Korean school. Later transferred to a newly constructed building. |
| March 1947 | The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (文部省) officially approved the establishment and operation of the Korean schools. There were 31 male students and 34 female students according to the town hall survey. |
| January 1948 | The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture reversed the decision, and vetoed the establishment and operation of the Korean school by sending an official notice: “Children that fulfill the age requirements, even if they are Korean, had to be sent to the same municipal school, private elementary school, or a middle school with the Japanese children.” |

*The reason behind this was the oppression of the Japanese government and GHQ on ethnic education in response to the political and social situation at that time, which were the intensification of democratic movement in Japan and the international tension in the Korean peninsula.

October 19th, 1948 The Korean school was closed

After that, children and students were forced to transfer to Hiraoka Elementary School and Hiraoka Middle School.

Many Koreans left Tenryu Village after the completion of the Hiraoka Dam in 1952 as well as after the resolution of the Sakuma Dam compensation problem that happened afterwards.

After that, the number of Korean residents decreased temporarily in proportion to the population decline of the entire region. Even so, in both Kamihara Village and Hiraoka Village the number of people totaled to 150 at the time of 1955, and 74 people with South Korean and North Korean nationality still chose to live in this area even after 10 years.

A Teacher's Reminiscence on Hiraoka Middle School

One teacher—who continued his service at the Hiraoka Middle School for 8 years since he

became a teacher in 1955—later said, “In Hiraoka, there was a great number of Korean people, and a lot of them went to the Middle School. We presumably had most of them among schools in Shimoina.” He also reminisced on the good memories of those days, “It’s probably because Korean residents and other locals had a neighborly relationship, and we were really happy that there was no discrimination between the students just because some of them were Korean.”

But on the other hand, he also noted:

“Once those students graduated and stepped into society that involves getting employed and married, there were many thick walls that they couldn’t easily break through. This cold reality was an absurdity that we teachers couldn’t tolerate. We know graduates who have suffered and shed tears because of this. When will we achieve an unprejudiced world with international harmony?”

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The Records of the Forced Relocation and Labor of Koreans

An excerpt from “戦争を掘る”

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The Records of the Forced Relocation and Labor of Koreans

An excerpt from “戦争を掘る”

Page 23 The start of forced labor was during the end of the Fifteen-Year War, it was exactly around the time when Chinese people had started being forcibly brought to Japan.

In the high school geography textbook, *High School Geography B*, there are statistics on the population change of Koreans living in Japan after the annexation of Korea. There were around 620,000 Koreans in 1935, but it suddenly increased to 1.19 million people in 1940, 1.88 million people in 1943, and it had risen to 2.36 million people when Japan lost the war in 1945. After the war, the number of Koreans residing in Japan decreased sharply to about 65 hundred thousand people in 1946.

Yearly	Number of Koreans residing in Japan
1904	229
1915	3,889
1920	30,175
1923	80,617
1930	198,091

1935	625,678
1940	1,190,444
1943	1,882,456
1945	2,365,263
1946	Around 650,000

It can be estimated that the approximately 1.75 million difference between the postwar number and the number in 1945 is the population who were forcibly brought to Japan.

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Kumagaya (Hiraoka) China 1,083 people (62 people died)

Dam The construction of the power plant

Allied Nations (13 countries) (93 Americans, 215 Britians)

Internment ibid. Korea 2,000-4,000 people (59 people died)

ibid.

Kumagaya City (Toyama) Koreans 200~

Tunnel Excavation

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There were nearly 20 workplaces/offices/factories throughout the prefecture that had been harmed, and it was estimated that the victims were 25,000 Koreans, who were the largest group, approximately 4,000 Chinese, and around 400 Allied soldiers.

Most of the violence took place in the form of forced labor after the victims were forcibly brought to Japan. Meanwhile, some were persecuted for being enemy aliens in Japan, and there were also cases of taking women and children and abusing them as “comfort women.”

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There are various forms of forced labor, but in the case of Korean laborers, it could be broadly categorized into two groups.

The first was that the laborers came to Japan after Japan’s colonization of Korea and were taken to forced labor sites for conscription. The other was that they had been taken directly from Korea.

For those who came directly from Korea, a certain number of people were assigned from each village and were forcibly taken to Japan against their will.

For those non-Japanese workers who were neither Korean nor Chinese, it can be said that all of them were POWs being held captive in battlefields.

Details of the persecution are not known, but they gathered and confined Westerners who came for summer vacation or owned villas in the area. They particularly harassed Christian churches and their followers.

The number of victims is estimated to be several hundred people, but that number is not confirmed except for the Chinese workers. In the case of those from China, there were records kept at contract companies, and thus we can estimate the approximate figure. There were no records found other than those, and there is a strong possibility that a majority of the documents had been incinerated to avoid assuming responsibility for the war.

The way the victims' corpses were dealt with varies, and it was better when the corpses were burned in the open air. Most of them were discarded in the mountains or buried at creeks. Due to that, the skeletonized remains floated away downstream by floods. Therefore, it was almost impossible to collect the remains because it was indistinguishable whether the bones belonged to one person or several people. Also, the locations of burial for many of them were unknown, so even excavating them became impossible. Particularly in the case of the Korean victims, none of the remains have been found yet. The bones collected at Hiraoka and Kiso Valley were mixed with each other and sent back to China as 'mixed bones (混骨 *konkotsu*)' or 'spiritual sand (靈砂 *Reisa*)'. This was a convenient term referring to the remains as it was impossible to distinguish between who's bones – Korean, Chinese, or other – they were.

Labor and Livelihood of the Koreans living in Nagano Prefecture before WWII

The Koreans who worked and lived in Nagano were not directly taken from Korea against their will. Nevertheless, it was still a fact that they came to Japan to make a living because they were deprived of their land and family, and they were brought here under the intention that they could be paid even less than the cheap Japanese laborers. Therefore, this is a topic we have to know

before moving to the discussion of forced labor during WWII, and thus I will discuss the issue in the following.

Nevertheless, most of the citations here are restricted to government historical records.

This survey shows merely a start, but please be understanding that we must start from somewhere, and I hope it begins here. In that regard, it is a memorandum of understanding.

The livelihood and Labor of the Taishō Era

Silk-reeling Workers

Firstly, Koreans that lived in Nagano Prefecture in the Taishō Era were female silk-reeling workers who mainly worked in the Suwa Region.

There were few Koreans in the first half of the Taishō Era (there were eight people according to the 1921 Nagano Prefectural Statistic Book), but the number rose to 250 people in 1925, and then to 442 people in June of 1926 [omission]

The reason for hiring Korean workers was because small and medium-sized factories were hit hard by the Depression of 1920 after WWI and it was difficult to hire factory hands. It was the first time Koreans-- who had experience working as spinning-mill workers at Yamasaki Silk Mill in Kawagishi Village, Suwa District--were hired on a trial basis.

Reportedly, the employment of Korean women was promoted by second-class entrepreneurs in Suwa, East-Chikuma, and Kamiina County, who “have heard that depending on how they are taught, they showed an unexpected strong performance and thus the Yamasaki Silk Milk has continued to increase the number of Korean employees.”

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Furthermore, from the perspective of factory owners, it was advantageous to hire Korean workers as “they are far away from their hometowns and can work for a relatively long time once they were hired. Unlike female workers from the mainland, they would neither return home occasionally for personal affairs nor require a hiring contract each year causing a great amount of expense.”

Also in terms of efficiency, the quality of the thread was poor at first due to the language barriers and the lack of high-quality technique, but it was believed that the Korean workers could reach the average level of “mainland female workers” once they attained proficiency.

The factory owner was always on guard as there were some cases in which Korean males that

understood the “mainland language” would become the superintendent of the female workers and brought conflicts with the factory owners by transferring to another mill with the women.

Furthermore, at some dormitories Korean women were put in a separate room from the Japanese women, but there seem to have been few conflicts.

Civil Engineering and Construction Workers

After the Great Kanto Earthquake in September 1923, the number of Korean residents decreased due to the Japanese government's restrictions on traveling to the mainland, but it increased once again with the abolition of travel certificates.

The total number of Koreans residing in Nagano Prefecture greatly changed depending on the season. There were 3,295 people as of the end of June 1925, but that number declined to 1,640 people at the end of December that same year.

This periodical change between summer and winter was due to the overwhelming number of civil engineering workers. Projects like the construction of railroads and power plants were suspended or cut back in bitterly cold weather, so the workers would migrate to temperate regions during that period. In addition, since sericulturists also did not hire employees throughout the year, the workers would go back to Korea and move to other prefectures.

It was construction of the power generators conducted by the Great Consolidated Electric Power Co., Ltd. at the Kiso River basin in the West-Chikuma County from 1921 to 1923 that led to the large-scale hiring of Koreans at construction sites in Nagano Prefecture. Five thousand

people were hired at its prime.

From 1924 to 1925, there was a sudden rise in constructing hydroelectric power generators in each area of Kitaazumi, Minamiazumi, Kitasaku, Minamisaku, and Shimotakai District.

Furthermore, the construction of trams—like the Nagano Electric-Railway located between Nagano (City) and Suzuka (Town), East River Railway in the Kamitakai District, and the Iiyama Railway in the Kamiminochi District—occurred, and the Koreans in socially respected jobs/industries received flattery/were favorably received.

In 1926 (the first year of the Shōwa Period), needless to say, the magnitude of the work to lengthen Maruko Railway in Kangawa Village, Chiisagata District; the lengthening of the electric tramway from Kamiida Village, Shimoina District to Matsuo Village by Ina Electric-Railway Co., Ltd.; the construction of the tram/track in Hiraoka Village, Kamitakai District by Nagano Electric-Railway Co., Ltd.; the construction of a power generator somewhere between Takase Village, Kitasaku District and Kawabe Village, and one in Sakae Village, Minamisaku District by Chikumachou Electric (Power) Co., Ltd.; the construction of a power generator in Shinanojiri Village, Kamiminochi District by Shinano Electric Co., Ltd.; the construction of a power generator in Shimashima Village, Minamiazumi District by Keihin Electric Co., Ltd.; etc. was significant/substantial.

Korean workers moved in from various places, and once the constructions for road improvement and embankment in Nagano Prefecture had started, “there are no places where Koreans are not seen and they have expanded their working places to more areas. It seems that the Shinshū

region became where the Korean workers yearn, considering its great weather.

The other Workers

Moreover, there were cases in which Koreans would be employed at sericulture farms if there were not enough Japanese workers.

Additionally, they were employed at sawmills, ironworks, silk mills, cotton factories and at the bathhouse. They worked as cargo couriers, shop employees, rickshaw racers, and day-paid workers; Some people also had more unique jobs, including one errand boy at the police station, two postmen, five automobile drivers, etc.

In summary, female Korean silk-reeling workers had about the same skills as the Japanese female workers. At the same time, they were advantageous for factory owners to hire and they compensated for the lack of Japanese workers.

Furthermore, the male workers needed to perform dangerous and heavy labor to barely be employed, such as constructing hydroelectric power generators, railroad tracks, and improving the river. Because of this, their jobs were also seasonal unstable.

Other types of employment were generally miscellaneous work or something similar.

The Reality of Construction Sites and Living at Bunkhouse

Office Historical Records of 1927

Living Conditions

The construction of the power plant took place in Yamabe District that was away from private houses. The workers built barracks or what would be called bunkhouses near the construction site. A group of a few or around 20 to 30 people (who were well-informed about the mainland and were reasonable to some degree) ate and slept together under the supervision of the head of the bunkhouse. At the construction site, they had to perform labors while managing everything by themselves. In addition, when the construction site was located in a region where there was scattered housing, the workers were accommodated in these private establishments. They might become the head of the bunkhouses as mentioned above and command their subordinates. However, in either case, they seemed to avoid co-living with workers from the mainland.

The heads of the bunkhouses deducted 0.70 to 0.75 yen daily as food expenses and 0.15 to 0.25 yen daily as living expenses from their subordinates' daily wages. As a result, some lived a wealthier life with their own wages plus the money collected from the workers. Daily life in Matsumori bunkhouse was very basic; for instance, they ate simple food such as rice and a side dish. Yet, their food expenses, which were imposed daily by the head of the bunkhouse, was about 0.20 yen more than that from mainland workers as they, for the most part, ate a lot more than the mainlanders. Not to mention, the majority of them only wore light clothes such as a shirt, a half-pant garment called handako, a pair of tabi socks and in barefoot, without owning

another pair of clothes to change. In the winter, most of them simply have one shabby winter cloth other than their usual wearings. In addition, even though the bunkhouses provided places to bathe, it was good enough for the Korean workers to bathe once 15 to 20 days, and there were even people who did not bathe for two months. Meanwhile, workers from the mainland had a custom of bathing after a long day of work to wash away their fatigue. Both sides viewed the other's custom as eccentric, and thus they all seemed to dislike living together.

Wages at the Construction Sites

Wages varied according to the lines of businesses. The common wage at the construction sites of power plants was 1.80 yen, and the wage for those working at the construction sites of railroads was 1.70 yen. Both food and living expenses were deducted from those wages.

The Working Attitude and Hobbies of Construction Site Workers

Workers living at each bunkhouse were merely just doing the work in front of them quietly, and few attempted to carve out one's own future through hard work. Most of them were lazy and would immediately take a nap when the supervisors were not paying attention. However, when these workers were constantly supervised and encouraged, due to their healthy and tough body and forbearing and obedient nature, they were able to reach work efficiency which surpassed mainland workers depending on the line of business. In addition to that, since they could be hired at a slightly cheaper price, there was a tendency to use Korean workers at construction sites which would then lead to more profits for various industries. Also, these workers barely had any hobbies, and instead, they were heavy alcohol and tobacco lovers. They spent 0.25 to 0.20 yen a

day on tobacco and used the rest of the money on alcohol. There had been many peripatetes who traveled from place to place. Recently, these kinds of people have not been seen, and there were many who were dedicated to saving money and sending them back to their hometowns.

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Regarding the Mitsushima Prisoner-of-War Camp

Mitsushima Prisoner-of-War Camp, officially named as the Second Branch Office of the Tokyo Prisoner-of-War Camp, was established in 1942.

The location is on the other side of Hiraoka Electric Generation Plant, and this place—now a section of Tenryu Middle School’s playground—regularly imprisoned 200 to 300 Allied POWs, who were mostly American and British, and forced them to do dam construction related work. After the war, people working in this POW camp received a severe sentence at the Yokohama War Crimes Trials, where the defendants were Class B and C war criminals, as 47 people (45 people) died at the camp. At the trial, it was considered that the prisoners “died by abuse.” Yet, more than that, all of the soldiers, who were sent to Japan after the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, were already weakened due to malnutrition, malaria, skin diseases, etc; The unusually cold winter in 1994 also considered to add to their deaths. Nevertheless, at the Yokohama Trial, six people, including the initial director of the camp, Captain Hironori Nakajima (from Nagano Prefecture), were sentenced to death, and four people were sentenced to life imprisonment. From the fact that the trials in Yokohama started with the personnel of the Mitsushima POW camp and their executions were carried out first, it is conveyed how much the

Allies took the abuse at this POW camp in Mitsushima seriously.

However, among these personnels, Youkichi Nishino, who received a memorandum when the POWs returned to their countries immediately following Japan's defeat, was not accused of war crimes. This memorandum, which has many signatures, testifies "to whom it may concern" in English that "he (Mr. Nishino) always showed compassion towards the prisoners, and by no means did he take our things nor exert violence over us." It was prepared to save him from the anticipated pursuit for war criminals.

(Mr. Nishino died in 1959 in a train accident.) Among the condemned criminals, many were natives of this village. Additionally, although the personnel of the POW camp were strictly held responsible for the crimes of abusing prisoners, the fact that there was nothing done to pursue the liability of personnel related to Chinese POWs, who also caused numerous fatalities, created a mix feeling for the villagers. Such sentiments still cast a shadow in this place.

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Korean Testimonies (excerpts only related to Hiraoka)

Mr. SI, Korean residing in Japan

In the same year of the Great Kanto Earthquake, I came to Japan alone looking for jobs at the age of 14, and I wandered through Northern Kyushu, Osaka, and Tokyo. I experienced the Great Kanto Earthquake by chance and was involved in that Korean massacre. I barely survived and

escaped from Tokyo to Northern Kyushu. I lived like a beggar there for a while and returned to my hometown in Korea soon. However, Korea was getting harder to live in, and my younger brother and I moved to Japan again at the beginning of the Showa Era. Yet, we couldn't find a decent job like last time, so we moved from place to place while doing construction work at each place, including those for dams, tunnels, railroads, and mines. My brother and I were conscripted to work in Kyushu, Shizuoka, Nagoya, Mitsushima, and the construction site of the underground factory in Satoyamabe at the end of the war. In Mitsushima, other than Korean workers, hundreds of Chinese workers and American soldiers were forcibly brought to the site and forced to perform labor to build the tunnel and the dam. Many victims died, and personnel of the construction burned their bodies; Sometimes they would bury them, and sometimes I saw them collect the bones and throw them into the Tenryu River like trash. It was utterly horrible.

Mr. IK, Korean residing in Japan

I came to Japan in 1933 at the age of 18. My older brother moved to Japan first and worked in a pottery factory, and I had worked in the same factory for eight years. However, when the war started, I worked in the construction site of Kurobe Dam in Toyama. People called us “travelers (旅の人).” Chinese and Americans were also brought to the site. We transported one earthenware pipe by two people, and there was a determined distance that we needed to transport them. If we took a break on the way, the supervisor would hit us with a stick. I was transferred from Kurobe to Mitsushima, and later I was appointed to work in the mountains of Ina and forced to stay there for two years. My job was to dig tunnels for water pipes which connect water to the dam. Some workers were directly taken from Korea, and some people fled due to the harsh labor. Once they were captured, the personnel at the construction site would ask villagers to beat them, and then

the military policemen would hit them so hard that you could even see stars. I was transferred to the construction site in Satoyamabe of Matsumoto around March, 1945. Around that time, the area was bombed, and thus the construction was rushed. This factor alone made the working conditions harsher, and some workers ran away. In this site, they forced Koreans to beat each other once they were captured, compelling them to punish each other as harshly as possible. I cannot express how horrible it was in words.

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An Interview with Do-kwon Park (朴斗權/박두권)

January 6th, 1986

While I was searching for any Korean resident living in Japan who would know the circumstances of that time, I found a man named Do-kwon Park (朴斗權/박두권) who lived in Hiraoka. However, Mr. Park already moved from Hiraoka and now lives in Azusagawa Village which is located in the suburbs of Matsumoto City. I visited the village and interviewed Mr. Park on June 1st, 1986. Mr. Park was born in 1910, and he was 75 years old when I visited. He had been living in Hiraoka for more than 50 years. Mr. Park willingly accepted the interview and talked calmly about the hardship he experienced since he was young.

In 1910, which was the year when “Japan’s Annexation of Korea” was rammed through, Do-kwon Park was born as the youngest child in a farmer’s family in Gyeongsan County of North Gyeongsang Province. His father passed away when he was one and a half. Around the time when Do-kwon was 20, 70 percent of the land in Korea belonged to Japanese people

through the “Land Survey Ordinance.” In the past, Korea was blessed with fertile land that people said “one year of good harvest would bring two years of rest.” However, after Korea became a colony of Japan, it was even hard for many people to pay taxes.

Do-kwon couldn't go to school as his family was poor, and he visited Japan at the age of 20 with the help of his older brother who had already been there.

After staying in Tochigi and Ibaraki Prefecture, I came to Mikawa-kawai and worked to construct the Sanshin Railway (the Iida Line today). Back then, there were six to seven hundred Korean workers on the site, and the daily wage was 1.5 yen. We did not receive payment for three months, and a strike occurred in August. After being arrested by the police, I was taken to Okazaki and tortured; for instance, they forced me to sit erect with my legs folded under one while having a bamboo stick in between, or they positioned sticks connected by strings between my fingers and squeezed them by pulling the string. Our wages were paid with a 10 percent discount at the end. Also, 0.70 yen was deducted from the daily wage of 1.50 yen as a meal charge. In this way our debt kept increasing as we had no pay on rainy days.

In 1993, I came to Yasuoka to construct the Kadoshima Dam. There were two to three thousand Koreans working on the site. Japanese people mainly worked as supervisors or attendants; those who served as construction workers were fewer than 10 percent. There was a labor union, and there were also people involved in underground movements. Some young people attended the Japanese learning session in the evening, but I was too exhausted to attend. I woke up every

morning feeling like I had just gone to sleep.

Most Korean workers were brought to the site against their will by the bosses (which he meant the Japanese). The bosses went to Korea and asked police to collect laborers, and the police and government offices in Korea had to cooperate with their request. The daily wage in Kadoshima was 2.80 yen, and after the meal charge of 0.80 yen was deducted, I couldn't even buy a drink. However, it would be cheaper if I worked in Korea. The daily wage for Japanese construction workers of that time was 7 to 10 yen and that for Japanese attendants was around 15 yen. Even though Korean workers only had one third of their wage, we had to complete a doubled workload or more.

I moved to Hiraoka in 1935. I had constructed roads and collected steel scraps, and in the meantime, the construction for Hiraoka Dam started in 1939. My job was to transport materials using trolleys and straw-baskets, and I struggled a lot to use the trolleys. The job applied a two-shift working system with a day shift and a night shift. I woke up at 4:30am and went to work at 6am after having breakfast; we switched with workers who had the night shift and worked until 6pm. The construction site was full of people day and night. We could not leave the bunkhouse even in the evening, and Japanese guards supervised us all night. Workers were provided about two cups of rice. We at least needed to eat about 13 cups everyday to have enough energy and were too hungry to work with just two cups of rice. The miso soup with shredded radish was also so tasteless it was like there was only half the amount of salt. The meal sometimes came with pickled grape leaves and trouts. If you wanted something else you needed

to pay extra money; if you bought eggs and liquor, you would be in a deficit and have no money to send it back to Korea.

A number of Korean workers died. Although some deaths were due to diseases, many died because of injuries, such as falling from trolleys. We did not wear the wooden protective gear while working for the tunnel construction, so I witnessed tens and hundreds of dead people carried from the tunnel. When working with the trolleys in Nukuta, I saw a man die after being hit by the haft of a shovel firsthand. When someone died, certain foremen gave us 15 to 20 yen as drinking money, although some foremen feigned ignorance. We cremated the bodies by ourselves; it was demanding to even burn one body since we lacked wood. If the head of the bunkhouse was a nice person, the cremains would be interred at the temple. However, there was hardly enough energy and time to do that. Even if we wanted to inform the bereaved families, the names and addresses of numerous people were not clear (since many were those who fled from other places). I believe that the number of deaths of Korean workers was three times that of the Chinese workers, as we had twice as many people in total and stayed longer on the site.

There were always people running away. Once they were captured, police took them away and imprisoned them for one week. They were also beaten by the foremen.

The Allied POWs, such as Americans and British, and Chinese POWs were sent to Hiraoka in 1942 and 1944 respectively. Among them, the Chinese POWs had the hardest time. The Allied POWs lived in a building with glass windows, where now stands the playground of the Tenryu

Middle School. Chinese and Koreans, however, lived in a building where the windows were simply covered by boards. It was unreasonable to let people work while giving no food; they were only given three of something like baked bread, and raw garlic was the only side dish. There was no way to have energy for work. The directors had sticks in their hands; some acted big and hit the POWs with the sticks.

The POWs hardly obeyed. In winter, they picked up cobbles with bare hands in order to lay tracks on the riverside. The cobbles were colder than ice, and they rubbed their hands every time they picked a cobble. Death was a daily occurrence. I heard 80 people died in total. Some Chinese wore what would be used as bags, which are so coarse that wind would blow through it (I guess he meant by gunny sacks).

When the war ended, I remember the federation sent a message, saying “Japanese are reckless now as they lost the war, so be careful.” They further stated “vengeance will not bring an end to this. The common citizens are innocent. Please inform us if anyone from the police and government offices behaved domineeringly.” For this reason, Hiraoka didn’t have any riots.

Although Mr.Park's brother and his family returned to Korea after that, he did not go back.

My brother and family who returned earlier didn’t tell me to come back, and thinking back now, I think I made the right decision.

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Interview with Sang-gwan Hong (洪象寬/ 홍상관)

August 7th, 1986

Sang-gwan Hong (洪象寬/ 홍상관) was born in 1921 and was 65 years old when I visited him. He lives in the town of Takamori and operates a barbeque restaurant. He is originally from Jeju island, the warmest region in Korea.

Sang-gwan told me that when he was little, he had a life worse than pigs nowadays.

I didn't go to school at all. We didn't have the money so I couldn't. I think my generation had the fewest people who went to schools compared to others. Some families only sent their oldest son to schools, and even though there were difficulties as we were colonized, I feel the parents also had a low awareness. Only nine children enrolled in elementary schools among the 60 tribes. Back then, all of the principals were Japanese, and police officers ranked higher than section chiefs were all Japanese too. Although I didn't go to school, since people from my village held a night school in winter for four months, I at least managed to learn how to read (all schools taught Japanese during that time). Around half of the tribe, including 50 to 60 households, came to Japan. Usually one person from the family would invite other members after they had moved to Japan and started working there. It became harder to sustain a living in Korea as the expenses surpassed the income in any case. Many people from the South came to Japan, and a lot of people from the North went to Manchuria. It is said that there are more than hundreds of Koreans in Manchuria. People from the North (North Korea) comprise fewer than 10% of the seven hundred thousand Koreans residing in Japan, and there are also seventy thousand Koreans living in Sakhalin.

My older brother was in Tokyo, so I came to Japan and visited him to study around the age of 15 or 16. I moved from Tokyo to Nagoya and stayed there for three years. Then, I came to Kizawa (Kizawa of South Sinano Village of today) in 1944. He worked for tunnel construction, and there were around a hundred Korean workers there. There were few Japanese, such as the onsite directors and the parols of the compressors. During that time, any construction was not able to proceed without Korean workers. Around February or March of 1944, the mountain at the back of the canal construction site in Kizawa collapsed, and four to five people on a break were buried alive.

All of the Korean workers participated in the tunnel construction connecting the Iijima Electric Generation Plant and the dam in Kizawa. The other workers and I constructed the tunnel in Wada. It was a dangerous job compared to now, and it didn't matter if one or two people died. Our job was to dig holes and set up dynamite.

We (the casual laborers) were paid 5 yen per day. The daily wage for people who were brought to the site was cheap, around 3 yen. We didn't have money left to save even with 5 yen of pay. We worked 12 hours from 7am to 7pm with a two-shift system of a day and a night shift. When we switched shifts once a week, we worked from 7am to 7pm and rested for two days.

There were also people fleeing in Kizawa. However, with little knowledge of the land and direction, few fled successfully and most of them were taken back. Once these workers were captured, they would let the heads of the bunkhouse (who were Korean) beat them. I saw that

several times in less than a year. I think the harsh labor wasn't the reason many ran away, instead, they did so because the actual condition was different from what they were told when recruited in Korea. Some Japanese were kind; I heard that there were even people who supported the fugitives, giving them rice balls and telling them the direction to escape. Many Koreans bullied other Koreans in the construction sites of Wada and Hiraoka, wanting to be acknowledged by the Japanese. I also heard a story that the bunkhouse head's brother was thrown into the ocean on the ship returning to Korea after the end of the war.

I came to Hiraoka in May, 1945. I stayed in Hiraoka for three months until August. There were more than two hundred American POWs, and there were people who died just after just one week of being there. It's impossible to survive simply eating congee made of rice and wheat bran. They also had to do the most demanding work, such as transporting cement and connecting rails. I felt sorry for them, and once I was told off by the director when he found out that I secretly shared my leftovers to the POW. The quality of the meals were divided into three levels-- Korean workers, Chinese workers, and POWs. The meals for Koreans were rationed, and the Chinese had bread. The POWs were miserable, and there were only 20 to 30 survivors. The U.S military brought food and supplies by aircrafts within two or three days after the war ended.

Chinese also lived in Hiraoka during that time. There were more Koreans--I guess around thousand people--than Chinese. During the time we stayed, it was when the construction for Hiraoka Dam was temporarily ceased and it was rushed to complete the power plant in Tōyama (Iijima Electric Generation Plant) to generate electricity.

The construction of the Iida Line seemed to have a lot of hardship too. According to a 80-year-old man, there was a bunkhouse at where now the timber company of Ichida Station stands, and it accommodated 70 to 80 Korean workers; they also piled stones to form a yard to prevent them from fleeing.

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Interview with Mr. Heiji Matsumura (松村炳治)

August 11th, 1986

Heiji Matsumura (松村炳治) was born in 1922 and was 63 years old when I visited him. He lives in Hiraoka and moved there with his father in 1940 around the time when the dam construction began. His father was the assistant of the chief director of the site. Before moving to Hiraoka, he worked in a tunnel construction site connecting to the Mitake Electric Generation Plant in Kiso-Fukushima.

Kumaga Gumi was the contractor for the construction in Hiraoka. The electric power plant, the tunnel, and the dam were responsible by Takashina, Miyakawa, and Yiwateya, the construction teams subcontracted to Kumagai Gumi, respectively. The Korean workers (they were called “*Hantōnin* 半島人” during that time) were recruited with a two-year contract, and they could choose to return to Korea or stay in Japan after that. Their daily wage was 1.90 yen with a meal charge of 0.90 yen. The workers usually had no money left after simply buying cigarettes,

Jikatabi¹, or a cup of liquor. If people did not buy drinks, they were able to earn around 10 yen a month, and Kumagai Gumi forcibly held 5 yen of it for savings (might to prevent people from fleeing). Some people invited their families after two years as the daily wage increased. Working outdoors, which was called “*Akari*”, would be paid 3 yen, and working in the tunnel would be worth around 3.50 yen. The jobs in the tunnel used a two-shift system rotating at each 12 hours, with a 45 minute lunch break and 15 minute cigarette break.

The main dish was usually thinly sliced trouts with salt, and the miso soup had salt in it. It was common to accommodate 50 people in one bunkhouse, and there were seven to eight bunkhouses across the Tenryu Bridge. Workers with families were provided with a kitchen and a living place with two rooms, and they covered the rooms with cement and straw bags. Many people fled, and after three months, only half of the workers remained. There were guards who held sticks that looked like the shaft of a pickaxe, watching over the laborers in the bunkhouse. When a Korean escapee was captured, the guards shaved his head and had other Koreans beat him. I think the man running away had his family in Japan. The munition factory in Ōsaki accepted fugitives and offered a high day pay, so there also had people who ran away from Hiraoka.

In 1943, American and British POWs were brought to the site. There were five hundred of them at the beginning, but the number decreased by half after one year. It seemed that bodies were sent to the cremation site everyday. The initial supervisor of the POWs was very strict, and he was sentenced to death on the trail after the war. The following supervisor had a gentle character, and

¹ **Jikatabi**: a style of traditional Japanese footwear made of fabric and goes up to the mid calf, and the sock-like shoe is divided at the toe.

he was awarded by the United States after the war.

Imamura (今村), the leader of a worker corps, treated the Chinese workers so badly that some even came back to him after the war. I later met this man when he was subcontracted to the Meiko Construction Corporation. For the other corps leader, Kamijō, his wife was very attentive; she made rice balls for the Chinese workers on the site and was greatly appreciated by them. The workers in his corps worked efficiently as well.

In 1943 and 1944, many Korean workers were half-compelled to work on the site. There were 150 to 200 people working for the power plant, and more than 300 people (around 400 to 500) working for the dam. The number might not reach 1,000 in total, but I think it was around 700 to 800. However, I only stayed in Hiraoka until 1942, so I cannot tell what it was like after that...

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Interview with a Japanese personnel

October 10, 1985

Etsurō Kitahara (北原悦朗) was a teacher now living in Igara of Iida City. He was born in 1926 and was 59 years old as of the interview. When he was a student of the Iida Middle School under the old education system, he was mobilized as a laborer and worked at the tunnel construction site of Kizawa, a place further upstream than Tōyama.

Etsurō had worked there for almost four months from August to December of 1944, and he was

in his 15 or 16. Their job was to clean gravels of the riverside and use cement mixers to make concrete. They were told that “once the dam is completed, it will generate sufficient electricity to build three aircrafts per day.” The mobilized students and Korean workers were the only ones working in Kizawa, and Koreans were the main labor force. The age of the Korean workers ranged from 20 to 60, and people in their 30s and 40s took the lead. Etsurō once sang Arirang² in Korean, and a Korean oldman in his 60s came to him and talked to him while holding his hands, “you must be Korean, otherwise you can’t sing the song that well.” The responsible of the site was a man in his 40s whose name was Kim, and he loved lamb meat.

For their meal, the bowl was always not fully served. Half of it was grains (rice and wheat) and the other half was sweet potatoes. The only side dish was a cup of miso soup with vegetables and Hijiki seaweed. He was not full even once during the four months. Even though students brought books to the site, it was not the right environment to study. They played trumpets to notify the lunch and wake-up time, but he couldn’t hit the right note for being too hungry.

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Forced Labor Regarding Construction For Dams etc.

Ontake Electric Generation Plant and Agematsu Electric Generation Plant of Kiso

2,014 Chinese were forcibly brought to the construction sites of Ontake and Agematsu Electric Generation Plant beginning in April of 1944 and throughout the following year. The shabby bunkhouse was simply planked and cracked. They wore the same clothes when they were taken

² **Arirang**: a Korean folk song that is often considered to be the anthem of Korea

from China, and ate small bread that contained 40% of bran. Performing heavy labor with a two-shift system of day and night, 179 Chinese workers died within around one year.

Kashima Ontake 699 people (44 deaths), Taisei Agematsu 299 (23 deaths). Kan Ontake 723 people (92 deaths), Toshima Ontake (20 deaths).

For these Chinese victims, graduates of the former Nagano Middle School initiated the establishment of a cenotaph in 1983. However, many details and the actual condition remained unclear for the approximately 2,000 Koreans workers, failing to console the souls of the victims.

Hiraoka Dam Yasuoka Dam

2,300 and 2,000 Korean workers were mobilized for the construction of Yasuoka Dam (began in 1932) and Hiraoka (began in 1939) respectively. Many Korean laborers also worked to construct the Hirugami Electric Generation Plant (began in 1943) and Iijima Electric Generation Plant (began in 1944) of the South Shinano village. On the cenotaph inside the Hiraoka power plant, a line “25 Chinese and 13 Korean Workers” to commemorate the victims was engraved after a list of 33 names of Japanese workers. However, it has been clear that 62 died among the 1,083 Chinese workers who were forcibly brought to Hiraoka and worked under the Kumagai Gumi Corporation. The number of Korean victims is considered to double that of the Chinese, but the real number still remains unknown. For Chinese workers, a monument named “Eternal Glory to Chinese Martyrs Deceased in Japan” was built at the east side of the Hiraoka Dam. The Mitsushima POW Camp (officially named “the Twelfth Branch of Tokyo POW Camp”) was

settled in Hiraoka in 1942. It always had 200 to 300 people detained; Most of them were American and British soldiers but also included those from South Asian, Netherland, and Canada. As 46 or 47 people died from disease in this concentration camp, five persons including the chief and his subordinates, accused of “POW abuse,” were executed by hanging as class-B and class-C war criminals.