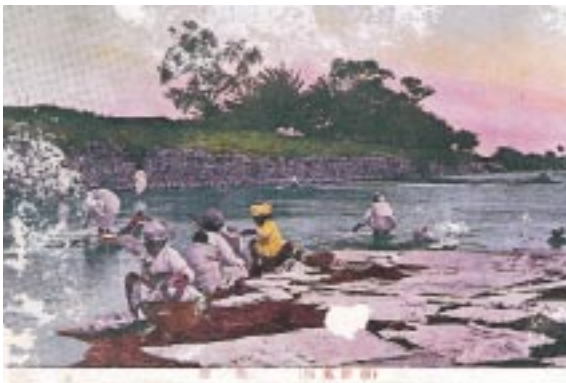


POSTCARDS OF COLONIAL KOREA ISSUED DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

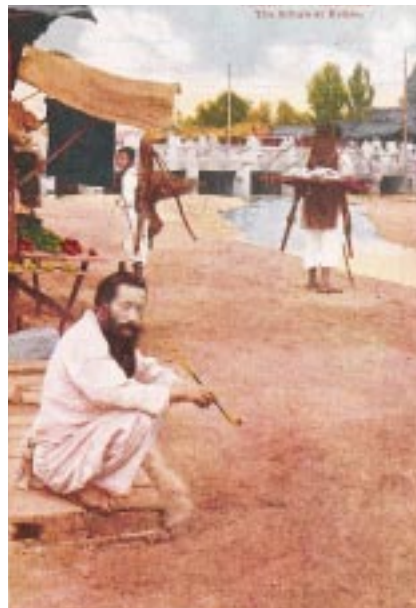
The Construction of the “Colonial Other”



“The Native Quarter” Seoul (Keijo)



Washing Clothes (From a postcard series entitled
“Customs of Korea/Chosen Fuzoku”)



Koreans using traditional “A-Frames”
for transporting goods on the back in
Seoul (Keijo)



“Korean Street” in Kyongju

The “Progress & Enlightenment” of Japanese Colonial Rule

(All postcards from the author’s collection)



The elegant Sun lounge of the prestigious Chosen (Korea) Hotel. Former Korean guard, Yi Gil, recalls that his grandfather’s store, *The Korean Curio Shoppe*, was located in front of this hotel.



A 1918 memorial card, bearing the portrait of the Japanese Governor commemorates 7 years of Japanese colonial rule in Korea



The Korea Government General Offices, Seoul (Keijo). In 1996, during the Presidency of Kim Young Sam, this building was demolished in a frenzy of national pride.



The Korea Exhibition of 1915 (Taisho 4), held in Seoul, commemorated the five years of Japanese annexation.

That those probably least able to control the tragedies were held accountable at the war's end for the crimes committed during its construction must remain a most curious paradox of the Thai-Burma Railway. More than 25% of those indicted, found guilty and actually executed for war crimes on the Railway were not Japanese officials, but Koreans.¹ Technically, these Koreans were *gunzoku*, sometimes rendered in English as "*civilian auxiliaries*," whose job was to guard the POW camps.² Who were these Koreans, how did they come to be involved in the Thai-Burma Railway's construction and why did they become victims of such opprobrium after the termination of hostilities?

The Japanese invasion of the European colonies in South-East Asia began a few hours before the attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor and was surprisingly successful. Little forethought seems to have been devoted to the treatment of the huge numbers of Western military personnel who would be forced to surrender by this "*sudden rampage*."³ Japanese military officials would later claim that the consequent shortage of manpower had been the reason for recruiting civilian colonial subjects (from both Korea and Taiwan) as *gunzoku* to act as guards for the proliferation of POW and other camps throughout Southeast Asia. This claim has been disputed by several Korean participants. Former *gunzoku*, Mun Tae Bok, asserts,

*"What was the reason for recruiting so many South and North Koreans and Taiwanese to guard the POW camps? It wasn't just because of a lack of available (Japanese) personnel. Rather it was that, in the eventuality of defeat, all responsibility (for treatment of the POWs) would be borne by us! The people who acted cruelly and caused the death of the prisoners would be Koreans, and not the Japanese military."*⁴

A communication from the Commander of the Korea Army, Itagaki Seishiro, to the (then) War Minister, Tojo Hideki, in Tokyo, of 23rd March 1942 suggests that other psychological motives lay behind the policy. The document urges Tojo to permit the dispatch of Allied POWs to the colony of Korea itself.

"By putting Koreans in contact with Caucasian POWs will (free them from their admiration of the West which most of them secretly harbour, convince them of the

real strength of our Empire and) promote the policy of assimilating Korea with Japan."⁵

Rather than acquiescing fully to Itagaki's suggestion, the Japanese authorities seem to have opted for the next best thing; instead of moving vast numbers of POWs to Korea, Koreans were to be moved to the locations hosting the POWs. From May of 1942, the recruitment of *gunzoku* for POW camp guards began throughout Korea. A month later some 3,000⁶ were gathered in Pusan for a period of two months' training at the Noguchi Unit.

*"They were hired for a period of two years and a salary of 50 yen a month. Officially, recruitment was voluntary but, in fact, it was compulsory and enforced by Japanese police officers in Korea. Later, the Japanese authorities failed to abide by the time limit of the contracts."*⁷

Although the salary of 50 yen was a not inconsiderable sum by the standards of the time, to what extent was the recruitment forced and what motivated the young Koreans to apply to become *gunzoku*? There can be no doubt that considerable pressure was applied to individuals, perhaps somewhat reminiscent of the "voluntary" mass recruitment of Malayan, Tamil and other labourers,⁸ except that the pressure was applied on an individual basis and that both the remuneration and status of the camp guards were, at least in theory, far superior to that of a menial labourer.

It should be recalled that Korea, a Japanese colony since the annexation of 1910, had been subjected to a ruthless assimilation policy, accelerated after the widespread 1919 March 1st Independence Movement, which had itself been particularly cruelly suppressed by the Japanese military. By 1938 teaching in the Korean language had been forbidden at all levels of the education system (education was available only in the Japanese language), military training had been introduced as a permanent feature of the school curriculum, young Koreans were forced to worship the Japanese Emperor at Shinto shrines and, in February 1940, under the policy of *Soshi Kaimei* (*Change of Registered Names*), all Korean people's individual names had to be changed from their original Korean to quite different Japanese names. Former *gunzoku*, Yi Hak Nae (who took the Japanese name of Hiromura Kakurai), writes,

*“My country, Korea, became a Japanese colony in 1910. I was born 15 years later, in 1925. From the time I went to primary school and began to think about the world around me, Japanese colonial policy penetrated every aspect of life. Japan was striving to wipe out the Korean race, by educating us to be subjects of the Emperor, to see Japan and Korea as one, by making us adopt Japanese names, by thoroughly abolishing nationalist education and popular customs, by having us bow in homage to the imperial palace virtually every day, visit shrines and swear allegiance to the (Japanese) Empire...Under the Mobilisation Law almost every day Koreans were forcibly seized and sent to work in the mines, as ‘volunteer’ soldiers or civilian auxiliaries in the army, or in the fire brigades or youth brigades. One day an elder friend told me they were recruiting POW guards for service in the south on a 2-year contract at 50 yen per month. I thought that I would learn something from such work, the pay was not bad and I could avoid military service by the 2-year contract; so I signed up. On the surface it was voluntary, but there was a quota for my district, and in effect we were impressed.”*⁹

A *Japan Times* article of 1st January further elaborated upon Yi’s story.

*“Tokyo controlled all aspects of life in Korea and enforced the policy of ‘kominka seisaku,’ under which all Japan’s citizens, including those in its colonies, were deemed to be children of the Emperor. ‘When I entered school, the national language was Japanese and we were punished for speaking Korean,’ Yi says. It was also forbidden to have a Korean name, so Yi became Hiromura Kakurai. ‘We had to make a pledge to the Emperor every morning at school and we had to bow to the east, in the direction of the Emperor.’ After six years at school, Yi started work on his family’s farm. Some of his older friends went to work in coalmines in Japan... The draft had not been introduced by 1941, but there were some major disincentives for those who reached military age and decided not to serve ‘their’ Emperor. ‘Although there was no draft, each district had been assigned to supply a certain number of volunteers each month’ says Yi. ‘If they didn’t fill that quota, rice rations were reduced or there would be other punishment from the Kempeitai (military police). We had little choice but to go.’”*¹⁰

I Gil (Yi Gil), who adopted the Japanese name Kasayama Yoshikichi and was sent to be a camp guard in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), records,

*“Workers in our neighbourhood of Seoul sometimes vanished in the middle of the night, only to turn up again six months or a year later. When you asked, ‘Hey, where’ve you been?’ they’d only say, ‘Don’t ask. I can’t tell you.’ I got one of them aside, a man about my age - just the two of us, drinking. All I could get out of him was that he’d been grabbed by the military for forced labour at a military port. I thought my time might be coming soon. If you’re going to be dragged off secretly as a laborer, maybe it made sense to go someplace more publicly, so in 1941 I took and passed the exams to become a uniformed civilian (gunzoku) in the Japanese army. Although it might look like you’d volunteered, force was behind it. There were even neighbourhood associations telling you that if you didn’t present yourself as a ‘volunteer,’ they’d cut off your rations.”*¹¹

Kim Wan Geun, another former Korean guard, states in an interview,

*“There was no one else to support my parents and do the farm work so I turned down the recruitment. The same request came again which I rejected as well. The third time, a police officer and the local ward head came to persuade me to join the auxiliaries. Again I turned them down, saying I couldn’t leave because of my family situation. Then the officer, who was Japanese, said it was the Emperor’s order and those who didn’t obey the Emperor’s orders were to be shot to death.”*¹²

In view of the tremendous cruelties that accompanied the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway, and the heavy retribution exacted upon the Koreans, it is important to understand the type of brief training that they were given in Pusan before leaving for Southeast Asia. That it hardly prepared the Koreans to respect the human rights of their POW charges should perhaps come as no surprise!

“In June 1942, on the basis of a simple written and oral test, 3,000 young men gathered under the Noguchi Unit in western Pusan. We swore an oath, did field

*training and learned the use of weapons; but though we were to be POW guards, we had no training whatever in the handling of prisoners or in languages. Instead, every day we had beaten into us the military spirit, the glories of the Japanese Army, the necessity for absolute obedience, and the Code of Military Conduct. Every day we were beaten a few times, and after 2 months' training we were sent to Southeast Asia."*¹³

*"When it seemed like I might be going to the (Dutch) East Indies, I went to the Maruzen bookstore in Keijo, as Seoul was called then, and bought an English book on the Indonesian language and studied on my own. I entered the military officially at the port of Pusan in June 1942. We were searched at the induction inspection, and when they discovered that book I was berated by the sergeant. 'From now on people all over the world will get along in Japanese. What'll you do with Indonesian and English?' He beat me up to teach me I was a dumb bastard with 'Western thoughts.' They didn't take my book away, though, and I kept studying on the boat. By the time we arrived in Surabaya on Java, I could greet people in Malay."*¹⁴

*"Our military training was of the same kind that was given to newly recruited Japanese soldiers. They taught us military discipline and loyalty. We didn't pass a single day without being slapped in the face a couple of times. The training was all about how to fight in the field... so we thought getting one's face slapped was part of education from the experience of this two months' training. So we slapped POWs for discipline, not because we hated them or wanted to abuse them. But for them it was a form of humiliation, which later was labeled as abuse... I didn't know such a convention (as the Geneva Convention) even existed. Only after the war did I learn there had been such a convention. If you have never been educated about it, how could you even know that it existed?"*¹⁵

It seems, then, that considerable pressure, direct or otherwise, was applied to many of these young Koreans to become auxiliaries (indeed, in Kim Wan Geun's case, he was even threatened with execution!), but the individual's decision to join was prompted by various considerations. In many instances, it was to avoid the ever-pending threat of being taken as an impressed labourer

and, later, of the military draft itself, as well as to hopefully advance their status within colonial society. It is also clear that many of these young men were extremely serious about the task that lay ahead. (Yi Gil went to the trouble of learning the Malay/Indonesian language as a preparation; Yi Hak Nae, himself from a very poor family of tenant farmers, mentions, *"I thought I would learn something from such work"*). Both the Koreans' own writing and their appearance in the various documentaries suggest they were, by and large, conscientious young men who were determined to make the best of their new jobs and left for Southeast Asia with high hopes.¹⁶

But it is highly likely that this trait of solid reliability and efficiency on the job - often mentioned and admired in general discussions about Korean character - hardly served them well on the Thai-Burma Railway!¹⁷ Deep in the jungle, with insecure food supplies, no medicines and appalling facilities - beset by monsoon rains and deadly diseases such as cholera - the Koreans were expected to meet the excessive and often callous labour demands of the Railway Engineers, regardless of the physical state of their charges. Trained but to obey their (Japanese) superiors' orders, and facing daily the demeaning discrimination with which the Japanese regarded their colonial Korean "subjects," the Korean guards were often themselves severely beaten by Japanese officers for failure to satisfy their labour demands.¹⁸ In such a situation, Korean "efficiency" and conscientious attention to the details of their job requirements would have severe affects upon the well being of the POWs (and Asian labourers) in their camps.¹⁹

*"It was the Korean guards, sharing their lives with them, who were most saddened by the mass deaths of the prisoners. This is because it is they who were in contact with the prisoners on a day-to-day basis. But they were army employees, at the very lowest level of the army: they had no authority. However, the hatred of the prisoners was directed...at those before their eyes who had to implement orders from (above). Living under such conditions, there were times when these guards beat or even tortured prisoners. Within the Japanese Army such behaviour was commonplace. The Korean civilian auxiliaries too had been taught by being beaten. Furthermore, according to Japanese army custom, in the case of infringement of the rules by a prisoner, beating once or twice without reporting (the infringement) to a senior officer or the Kempeitai was considered a kindness; the act of beating was viewed in a fundamentally different way."*²⁰

*“Ordinary (Japanese) soldiers were themselves deliberately bashed and brutalized as part of their training, but the Korean and Taiwanese civilian auxiliaries were inferior to the lowest Japanese private soldier; though constituting (from the POWs’ viewpoint) a part of the ‘enemy’ they were at the same time themselves victims, as much alienated, victimized and exploited as, on the other side, were the POWs and the Asian labourers. Since the Koreans... were deprived even of their names, as well as their language and culture, their humiliation was in a sense deeper, even if invisible, to those whose role it was for them to ‘guard’.”*²¹

Some POW accounts suggest that it was the demands of the Railway Engineers (who actually supervised construction) that were more detested by the prisoners than the Korean guards. Sir Edward Dunlop writes, *“In my experience, however, most of the brutality and actual violence meted to our prisoners was by the engineers”*²² and Robert Hardie notes in his diary, *“Even the Korean guards were appalled by the behaviour of the engineers.”*²³ Curiously, only one death sentence was imposed (later commuted) upon an engineer, whereas 25 (out of a total of 32 death sentences in war crimes related to the Thai-Burma Railway) were given to Korean guards.²⁴ One engineer with the 9th Railway Regiment, Sugano Kenichi, states,

*“Our goal was to finish the project so the more laborers the better. We asked for as many POWs as possible and sometimes complained that there were many (fairly fit) POWs still not being used.”*²⁵

The attitudes of the POWs themselves did little to help alleviate matters and many of the young Koreans must have been more than a little dismayed at the hostile attitudes and lack of cooperation manifested by their new charges. As former Australian POW Hugh Clark described in his book, *“Last Stop Nagasaki,”*

*“My generation had been brought up under the influence of the White Australia policy and considered ourselves superior. Our attitude to our captors had, at all times, been defiant and arrogant. We sabotaged anything we touched. We stole anything not nailed down or watched... We must surely have been an infuriating embarrassment to our captors.”*²⁶

The results of these attitudes were detailed in Yi Gil's account,

*"Sure, we beat and kicked prisoners in order to make them work. But their (the prisoners') principle was to work as little as possible. Some strong ones would finish their work quickly and then just sit there. That's when we'd clash... The prisoners would do what they weren't supposed to do - steal things, hide things, and pilfer from the work unit they'd been assigned to. Even one missing tool was treated by the construction unit as if it had been a weapon bestowed directly by His Imperial Highness. Some of the things they stole were consumables like paper and food. Our clothes were too small for them, so they didn't steal those. When we caught them, we beat them."*²⁷

Julian Ryall describes Yi Hak Nae's impressions on meeting his first POWs,

*"In September 1942, Yi left his homeland for the first time, aboard a transport ship in a convoy bound for Thailand. From Bangkok, he was dispatched to the town of Nong Pladuk, west of the capital, where he came face to face with his first prisoners. 'I was scared when I saw my first prisoner. The first ones were from Britain and Australia, and they were very tall,' he says, tipping back his head and indicating with his hand how they towered above him. 'They also whistled a lot and they sang 'Aye, aye, ippy, ippy, aye.' They wouldn't stop whistling even when I told them to be silent. I was terrified of them'."*²⁸

Explaining his own behaviour towards the POWs, Yi explained,

*"At that time our only concern was to complete the railroad as quickly as possible. Looking back at it now, I feel sorry for them (the POWs) but at that time, we couldn't afford to feel sorry for anything. All that was in our heads was to complete the project quickly."*²⁹

Perhaps the most intriguing account of a Korean guard's interaction with POWs was published by Lt. Col. W. Henderson in his account of the CBI (*China Burma India*) Theatre where

he had served as a pilot with the US air force.³⁰ Due to the curious story related, Henderson's own comments on how the manuscript came into his possession are repeated here.

"In 1971, after sending a letter to the Far East Prisoners of War Association (Britain), I received a letter and a manuscript from former POW, T. B. Bingham.³¹ He apologised that the manuscript had many 'grammatical and spelling' errors, but he hoped to get it corrected and in print. Due to the extraordinary character of his account relative to his escape, I am relating his story as he sent to me in his rough manuscript.... I made numerous attempts to contact Mr. Bingham again, but all correspondence came back marked 'gone away' by British postal authorities. I have not been able to determine if he is no longer living or if he moved from his Wallingford, Berkshire, England address with no forwarding information. He could possibly be the only man to escape the 'Death Railway' and live to relate the story.³² I believe his story to be too graphic and detailed not to be true. It should be recorded."

The entire manuscript is lengthy and space considerations do not permit its full reproduction in this short article. Rather, only the parts relating to the Korean guard, Kanamura, are repeated below. (Some minimal editing and correction of punctuation has been necessary, the words changed being indicated in brackets). Bingham prefaces his story by explaining that, after completion of the Railway from Tha Makham to the Burmese border, his POW unit had been sent to Chiangmai where he had been hospitalized for three months after becoming temporarily blind. His eyesight restored, Bingham was still suffering from TB when he was transferred to a working party at his own request.

"Our new camp was at Lampong in the far North East of Siam³³ and we were working to maintain lorries in order to transport troops and supplies further up the line. Conditions were a great improvement... and we began to pick up. As we were in the direction of Chungking, we often considered the opportunity to escape.... In the car park I would arrange to have two of us on guard, one with a revolver, whilst the others talked over the plan of escape. One day a Korean guard, Kanamura, who was a pleasant bloke, approached us and asked what we were talking about. 'Oh,' I said, 'Just this and that.' 'Don't you ever consider escape?' he asked."

“Sometimes. It’s our duty to try, but we have no chance here,” we answered. He then went on to explain our geographical position and to give us details of troop concentrations, etc. Later that night the six of us talked the matter over. If we could trust Kanamura - and we agreed we had to - but, to make sure, whenever we were talking with Kanamura, two of us (would always be on guard and) would be armed, one with the revolver and the other with a knife; if we were arrested, Kanamura would be immediately executed. I must explain that Kanamura had said that he, too, would like to go, that he was a conscript and his ambition was to go to America to study. He asked that, if we made the escape, could we get him there? We promised this together with (the sum of) 10,000 rupees.

“Lying in bed with all our kit packed, we waited for Kanamura to come. He would be on guard and the plan was that he would pass out rifles and ammunition. He came and silently we filed out towards the Japs’ quarters. All was silent, and the moon a bloody big ball in the night. October 28th, our regimental anniversary... Kanamura entered the Jap hut. This was it. Would he or would he not? If he betrayed us now, we would put up a fight. All we had was the one revolver and parangs.³⁴ Kanamura appeared, carrying a rifle and a belt of ammunition. We took these off him and passed them back. Hearing a click, I then knew that the last man (at the back) had, as agreed, loaded his rifle just in case. The first leg was over. Quietly another (rifle) appeared; again the click, (and so on) until seven rifles had been collected. Silently we melted into the jungle, running (as if) the devil himself was on our heels, and pausing only to cut the telephone wires, we made hard for the mountains. Five miles on, we came to a concrete bridge. Would it be guarded? This we could never have ascertained beforehand. Creeping forward, we found it was guarded, but only by the Thai Army. By the simple expedient of walking under the bridge, we passed successfully. By now the jungle was as bright as daylight, and we had no trouble whatsoever of making our way along the path, taking our direction due north by compass...”³⁵

The account describes in detail the group’s progress for some days. Bingham tells of their resting on “about the ninth day” at “a native village whose inhabitants wore black costume

with heavy silver jewelry" (probably a Hmong/Miao hilltribe village). His description of meeting "after a further three days" an opium trader, "not unlike a *Ghurka*," is similarly accurate. This opium trader, fearing the fugitives' presence would invite undue attention to his activities by police or military authorities, agreed to find them food and guide them across the mountains for the next two days. The next crucial incident in the tale took place exactly two weeks after their escape from Lampang.

"I waited, and eventually was joined by Willie Ponton. 'Look at that,' I exclaimed; and there in all its simplicity, was a tailor made dog end (a black tobacco cigarette but) - out here in the wilds, miles from nowhere, was a dog end - it could only mean one thing; the Japs were on to us. Motioning the others to join us, we decided that a break and a conference were urgently needed.

"The situation was this; the Japs would be operating in small patrols, say of seven men, and although part of a larger force, we could well handle any such force of this size provided we were not surprised. What we had to do was to get moving fast. All seemed in agreement, and when I asked if anybody else had any suggestions, only Kanamura thought that we should split up into ones and twos and make our way independently, and so broaden the chance of at least some of us making it. This was overruled, in favour of keeping together as a fighting force.

"On we pushed, not seeing any further sight or sound of the Japs, but now with an urgency which placed all our previous aches and pains in the limbo of forgotten things... All that day it was speed, speed, and more speed. Well on into the moonlight we went. On the side of a very steep mountain, we decided to camp for the rest of the night. By now everybody was exhausted, but I insisted on the usual routine of one man on guard, relieved every hour... Carefully as always, we placed our rifles on our right-hand side, under our blankets and within minutes we were asleep, absolutely done in.

"A very loud bang awoke me. Astonished and bewildered I paused, uncertain. Another bang, quickly followed by another. Groping for my rifle, I felt and felt, but

nothing was there. In panic I stood up in the darkness, although the moon was still shining, I was unaware of its brilliance. Suddenly I felt a very hard blow on the right arm which spun me around completely knocking me off my feet. I fell down the hill to a distance of some twenty feet, landing in very thick undergrowth. Instinctively, my regular army training told me, when in doubt, lie still, very still until you can appreciate the situation. I heard a threshing of feet above me; it must have been a Jap patrol. What seemed a year passed, and by now my right arm began to throb like the guitar of a pop singer. I kept still - very still. "Bing...Bing," came a voice. It was Kanamura's. Uncertain, I remained still somehow or other. I did not like the sound of his voice, and also now I could only hear one pair of feet moving around. I remained silent. Time passed slowly and gradually came the dawn. Fingers of light penetrated the woods. By this time all was silent above me. I waited for full light. It came...

"Crawling slowly upwards, inch by inch, listening all the time for any sounds whatsoever, I made my way towards our camp. All was silent. By now, my arm was throbbing painfully which made difficulties for my crawling abilities. Still not hearing any movement, I judged that I could stand and approach. Stuffing my injured hand into my shirt, I walked into the camp. All my comrades were dead and the place was in a shambles. Our packs and gear were strewn all around. To see if there was any life at all, I inspected each one. Soulby was still curled in a ball, his natural way of sleeping. Rennie was dead on his face, as was Tinker Bell. Willie Ponton was lying on his back, arm outstretched to where his rifle should have been, shot through the head and his false teeth hanging half out of his mouth. But there were only four. Where was Kanamura? What I wanted immediately was a rifle, but there was none to be found. What had happened? And most important of all, what was I to do now?..."

Bingham seems to have survived for another two weeks, despite the loss of the use of his right arm and the increasing pain it caused him. He was captured by a Japanese search party while asleep, and probably semi-delirious. *"Later I was to learn I had been going in this condition for fourteen days."* Almost a month had passed since his leaving Lampang - an extraordinary feat by the standards of wartime Southeast Asia! He was taken back to the temporary camp

that the Japanese had constructed in the hills, where he was interrogated and eventually allowed to sleep.

“The sun was going down when I awoke and the pale pink rays were penetrating the hut to its farthest corners. When suddenly I peered, there was somebody else there sitting hunched up with his head between his knees. I rustled my feet to make a noise. Slowly the apparition raised its head - it was Kanamura! For two days we remained here whilst from time to time, we heard the return of various patrols from outlying districts. These were welcomed with cries of joy and energetic gesticulations whilst we were inspected by all and sundry. They talked in a quiet tone to Kanamura and appeared friendly to him, but as for me, I was their chief ‘Bugaro’³⁶.... During all this time, Kanamura would not look at or speak to me. I was amazed and hurt. And for the life of me, I could not understand why. But on the last night before we left to come down the mountains, an officer came in and sat between us. He spoke in Japanese to Kanamura often, now and then turning to me and asking the odd question. Suddenly, after a spirited conversation with Kanamura, he jumped up in anger and left the room. Kanamura looked very frightened. Again, I asked Kanamura what had happened back at our camp, and who had ambushed us. He began to talk, and (to my) mounting horror and unbelief he told me. It was him!

“After the cigarette episode, he thought that as a party we had no chance, but, if he got rid of us, on his own, he stood a better chance. It was as simple as that. So he decided to get rid of us. My main reaction to learning all this was, and is still today; how (had) he managed to kill four men so quickly and wound me? It was he who had removed our rifles, and thrown them into the jungle before commencing his extermination program. Not having heard me answer, he presumed I was dead. Fortunately for me, he had no further time for investigation, as he (had revealed his own location); his rifle shots would have attracted a Jap patrol, so he made off as fast as he could, (only to be) captured three days before myself. What tale he spun to the Japs, I never did learn, because after leaving there, we were to speak only a few sentences to one another.”³⁷

Subsequently, Bingham and Kanamura were moved to Bangkok where they faced a substantial military trial. Bingham appears not to have understood the details of the proceedings, but his description of the arrival of none other than General Yamashita Hobun himself (“*The Tiger of Malaya*’ whom I recognised from his photographs”) in the courtroom, sounds authentic. He then records his last encounter with Kanamura.

“About a week after my trial, early one morning, the passageway resounded to the noise of boots and the rattle of equipment. I must mention that (usually) all the guards wore ‘sneakers,’ so they could approach prisoners’ cells in silence and thus keep them under observation without the prisoners’ foreknowledge. So, these unnatural sounds portended something was about to happen. A rattle of keys followed, and again footsteps. They were approaching my cell. Gently I heard my nick-name called, ‘Bing... Bing,’ he said. I turned my head and beheld Kanamura standing there. Dressed in full uniform, he was standing between two guards who were fully armed with rifles, etc. ‘Come here,’ he asked. The tone of his voice was soft and wistful and I had never heard anything like this, from Jap or Korean. I arose and approached the bars, saying nothing, but wondering. Face to face we stood. I looked into his eyes. They were black and vacant. ‘Why did you do it?’ I asked. He ignored me, and just looked at me for a while. He spoke: ‘Do you forgive me?’ he countered, ‘I shall not see you again.’ The five of us stood silent - the two guards, a prison warden, Kanamura and myself. ‘I have nothing to forgive,’ I replied. ‘This is a matter for God and yourself.’ ‘But do you forgive me?’ he insisted. ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I do.’ At this, he turned and walked away, followed by the two guards, his head held high. The warden waited by my cell and watched them slowly disappear down the passageway. ‘Where’s he going?’ I asked. The warden turned, and drew his hand across his throat in a gesture signifying beheading, then he turned his back on me and walked away.”

The remainder of Bingham’s document deals with his subsequent transfer to Singapore’s Outram Road prison, and conditions in that prison (again, seemingly quite authentic) where he remained (still fearing he might yet be executed) until the war’s end. As this lengthy part of the account bears no relation to the Korean guard, Kanamura, it has been omitted. In view of Henderson’s inability to subsequently contact the author, further investigation into the details of

Bingham's narrative present substantial difficulties. It can, however, be stated that the descriptions of the terrain and inhabitants of the area seem to be accurate, as does the time schedule for a journey on foot through the mountainous terrain from Lampang to the northernmost parts of Thailand. Bingham's comments about his treatment under the Japanese military structure and the court in Bangkok also ring true (as do the depictions of his later stay in Singapore's Outram Road Prison).³⁸

Although POW accounts of the Korean guards are almost all overwhelmingly negative, there are a few notable exceptions. Sir Edward Dunlop speaks well of "*the local Korean No. 1, Yamamoto*" and "*Korean Joe*" whom he terms, "*A great-hearted old ruffian, our Joe.*"³⁹ There are a few other favourable comments, though sadly these form very rare exceptions to the general rule.

*"Konoye, a severely pock-marked and completely unshaven Korean, who spoke a fair amount of English... said he had studied at Waseda University in Tokyo... Konoye turned out to be a great character, though not exactly an attractive one, and provided a continuous source of amusement, when he wasn't too bad tempered."*⁴⁰

Laurens van der Post, the South African novelist who had been a British army POW in the same camp on Java in which Edward Dunlop's Australian unit had initially been interned, writes in his autobiographical account, "*The Night of the Blue Moon,*" of an important relationship he developed with a Korean (though apparently not a camp guard) over a period of some 18 months.

"Then suddenly, towards the end of 1944, by what seemed to me at the time a miracle, I established contact with a source which enabled me to look as it were through a keyhole into the minds and intentions of the Japanese military command. I owed this again to my Chinese friends still at liberty outside our prison walls. They sent me a message one day that a Korean Christian working for the Japanese military intelligence in the island had asked to be put in touch with me... I am ashamed to say that a suspicion of my Korean informant never entirely left me until the end, and that I took the utmost precautions in any answers I sent him to make them as innocent as possible.... (Kim spoke of important orders received from Field Marshal

Terauchi, the Japanese commander-in-chief for Southeast Asia, the details of which he did not know. Later Kim reported that a decision had been made to close all POW camps on Java, and to regroup all prisoners in Bandung, which he considered “*an ominous sign.*” Later) “*Kim’s considered interpretation of the move reached me. It was what I had feared. He had had a glimpse of Field Marshal Terauchi’s secret order to his commanders. They laid down clearly that, when the Allies began their final assault in Southeast Asia, they were to kill all the prisoners in their camps, military as well as civilian, and fight to the classical Samurai end.*”⁴¹

Due to the discriminatory attitudes against Koreans prevalent at the time, the Japanese would never have trusted the Korean guards anyway. Yi Gil writes that towards the end of the war,

*“The Japanese began to worry that the Koreans might cause a rebellion. So they took our thirty-man squads and broke us into little groups of three or four. We were physically a lot stronger than the Japanese - better in the head, too. That was because they chose only three thousand out of 30 or 40 million of us, only the best, while they were the dregs.... They built an education unit to indoctrinate us Koreans to be loyal subjects of Japan, but things were so bad that shots were even exchanged.”*⁴²

At the end of the war, however, the Koreans - as the camp guards who had been the most visible agents of cruelty and even torture - were singled out by the perhaps understandably vengeful victims (the POWs), as the people most responsible for the tragedies. Although the treatment of POWs by the IJA had been an important subject mentioned in the Potsdam Declaration, the issue of colonies and the situation of Japan’s colonial subjects were never addressed. In the international situation of the times, such an omission was probably inevitable. The British were determined to stage token trials for those of their own colonial subjects - Indians - who had joined the Indian National Army organised by Subhas Chandra Bose and cooperated with Japan; while Holland was soon to wage an all-out war against its own colonial subjects in Indonesia who were demanding independence. (The Indonesian independence leaders, such as Sukarno and Hatta, were regarded by the Dutch as having been Japanese collaborators). The normally anti-colonial attitudes of the USA were presumably dampened by problems with the reoc-

cupation of their own Asian colony, the Philippines. The Koreans (and Taiwanese) were consequently treated as *Japanese* subjects, since, although colonial subjects, they had still been part of the Imperial Japanese Army. Thus did the Korean guards on the Thai-Burma Railway come to be charged as B and C-class war criminals.⁴³

Space considerations do not permit a full repetition of the detailed studies and findings of other more qualified and competent scholars who have examined the wealth of documentary records connected with these trials. Utsumi Aiko examines the legal aspects of the trials in her two articles, *“Prisoners of War in the Pacific: Japan’s Policy”* and *“The Korean Guards on the Railway”* while Gavan McCormack has delved into the records of five different trials involving Korean Guards in *“Apportioning the Blame: Australian Trials for Railway Crimes.”*⁴⁴ Suffice it to say that all the cases examined indicate that these tribunals were deeply flawed; there are clear instances of mistaken identity, a great deal of circumstantial evidence that would not normally have been permitted in a court, a general lack of conclusive evidence (most of the “accusers” were not present at the trials and could not be cross-examined) and arbitrary judgments which - it might be stated - must have all made the tribunals seem reminiscent of the situation pertaining under the Japanese army itself! John Williams, one of the Australian prosecutors involved in these trials who handled 100 cases within 3 months later claimed,

*“In most cases the POWs didn’t even know the real names of the Japanese and those accused; mostly they only knew them by the nicknames that the POWs themselves had given them. It can be said that those convicted received their guilty verdicts almost by accident. But although it is easy to regard these trials as inadequate, what else could have been done other than hold the trials? There was no other possible solution. The Japanese army in Southeast Asia had committed many atrocities. Should this have been completely ignored? Should the treatment of the Dutch (and other) POWs, and the massacres of native civilians in China and Singapore have been simply forgotten?”*⁴⁵

Yi Hak Nae’s trial in Singapore involved some clear irregularities and is mentioned as a representative example due to its involving a well-known former POW and Australian national hero, the late Sir Edward Dunlop. Yi records his initial indictment and trial,

“A few months later, however, the indictment was dismissed and I was released from Changi prison; but while on my way home on a repatriation ship I was arrested again at Hong Kong, and then sent back to Changi. Without any investigation I was charged under an indictment that was the same as the previous time, save that where there had been only four affidavits the first time there were now nine, and that forcing sick prisoners to work was now said to have led to death. Colonel Dunlop’s name had also been added to those charging me... (The trial) consisted of a simple interrogation as to my identity, recording of plea and questioning of witnesses. None of those charging me appeared in court. After a completely inadequate hearing of less than two hours, and on the basis of an examination of documents alone, the hearing ended and judgment was pronounced: death by hanging. At that moment I fell into a state of nervous shock. It is difficult to express what I felt.”⁴⁶

Questioned about the document presented at Yi’s trial Dunlop later stated,

“There was a time when I would have quite happily murdered Hiromura (Yi Hak Nae) to help the sick prisoners... Yes, this document is by me. It is a general report prepared by me for my superior officer (name unintelligible). That’s my signature on it... But I didn’t know it would have been used in this strict way. I was asked by the army to sign it. There were many worse examples than Hiromura. If I had testified, I suppose I would not have thought of demanding a death penalty - punishment; certainly - but a death penalty is too heavy.”⁴⁷

Another disturbing feature of the immediate post-war experiences of the Korean guards is the allegations of physical abuse that they suffered while imprisoned by the Allied forces in Singapore. The allegations are too numerous to be ignored.

“There were times when the faces of all prisoners would show signs of having been beaten when they were let out into the yard in the morning. Two prisoners died at this pretrial stage from such beatings. The ill treatment of those who were under sentence of death was even more severe, and one prisoner, who feared this violence more than the death penalty, committed suicide... The other kind of ill treatment

was through starvation. Food at Changi consisted of two meals a day: two biscuits and a bowl of hot water-like soup in the morning, and a bowl of mixed wheat and cornflower porridge in the evening... As a result of this postwar ill-treatment, there were many among the war criminals who, rather than thinking about their own war responsibility, came to have a strong sense of themselves as victims of ill-treatment.”⁴⁸

In his account, Yi Hak Nae describes his own experiences in Changi Prison.

“It was a living hell, it hurts just to think about it. They gave us barely enough food to keep us alive and so we were always hungry, but after a while I didn’t feel like complaining... After a while we didn’t even have the strength to talk... When the Japanese reprimanded us they used the palms of their hands and slapped us around the face. But the (British, Australian and Dutch) prison guards used their fists, like they were boxing, and they hit us in our stomach... And if they found out that we had been at a railway construction site, that would give them an excuse to treat us badly.”⁴⁹

Freed from the Japanese yoke, Korean society - both North and South - has judged harshly of those accused of collaboration with the hated Japanese colonial regime. As a result, after their eventual release from Sugamo prison, many of the Korean guards had little option but to remain in Japan, now as “aliens,” their former Japanese nationality having been removed by the Japanese government after the San Francisco Peace Treaty. No longer Japanese nationals, they were excluded from any form of governmental compensation for their wartime services.

“Two of my friends committed suicide. One jumped in front of a train, and another hanged himself. They couldn’t bear the hard life and sense of alienation; that’s why they committed suicide. It was a miracle that they survived through the difficult trial, but afterwards without any support from the Japanese government they became increasingly depressed. I won’t forget (them) until the day I die. I hold this deep grudge against the Japanese government. If only there had been some kind of support system for them, they would not have had to die.”⁵⁰

Although some 50 families of Korean survivors or executed guards appealed through the Courts about their situation, the Japanese Supreme Court finally determined that they had no legal rights to compensation. The District and Appeal level courts' decisions, although legally similar, had, however, stated that the Japanese Government had a moral obligation to assist the Korean guards. Belatedly, the Koizumi government determined to offer all survivors who remained in Japan a 4 million yen one-time payment if they "*suffered injuries or illnesses due to their wartime service,*" but for those families of guards who had died, the amount was reduced to 2.6 million yen.⁵¹

For those who did return to South Korea, all Korean claims related to the colonial period and the war were regarded as settled by the Japan-South Korea Normalisation of Relations Treaty in 1965; those who had returned to Korea, as former "war criminals," considered it unwise to press any claims.⁵² After Pak Yun Sang, a camp guard in Indonesia had been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment at a court on Java, his wife in Korea, unable to bear the odious reputation, committed suicide. Pak nevertheless returned to live in his native land.

*"People say we collaborated with the Japanese. Even now, it's not easy to go out on the streets. I don't like to go far from my home because people all point at me... It must have been much harder for her at that time."*⁵³

After reading the POWs' accounts of their experiences, it is difficult to empathise with the plight of the Korean guards. Much more difficult must it be for those who had direct experiences of their often callous actions! Yet at the same time, it is equally difficult not to be moved by Yi Hak Nae when he expresses his thoughts after being condemned to death in Changi Prison, in what must be considered yet another tragic paradox involving Japan's treatment of Asian people on the Thai-Burma Railway.⁵⁴

"What I suffered from most in there was knowing that everybody back in Korea was celebrating independence. They were joyful! But we war criminals on death row felt guilty for having collaborated with the Japanese and betrayed our people. How much is my family going to suffer when they hear about me? I wondered. Who and what am I going to die for?.... In the case of the Japanese war criminals, it was easier

because they could console themselves that they did it for their own country. We didn't have even that. Although we were in the same death prison, we were totally different from the Japanese. We suffered more. I can't feel too sorry for my comrades who had to die."

FOOTNOTES

¹ Utsumi Aiko: *"Chosenjin BC-Kyu Senpan no Kiroku (Records of Korean B & C-Class War Criminals):"* Keiso Shobo, Tokyo, 1982.

² A great deal of misunderstanding surrounds the term 'gunzoku'. One otherwise reputable military historian mistakenly identifies 'gunzoku' as "civilian specialists... attached as required to deal with particular technical projects" and even claims that they were chiefly "engineering graduates." (Clifford Kinvig: *"River Kwai Railway;"* (Brassey's, London, 1992): pp. 42 & 46. (This should not, however, be held to detract from this otherwise valuable work). In this article, they are termed 'guards,' 'camp guards,' 'civilian auxiliaries,' 'members of a paramilitary unit' or simply by the original Japanese term, 'gunzoku,' depending on the relevant information source.

³ This description of the Japanese attack is taken from Nicholas Tarling: *"A Sudden Rampage; The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, 1940-1945;"* (Hurst & Company, London, 2001). The number of Allied prisoners taken is usually given as around 260,000.

⁴ Interview with Mun Tae Bok in a Yomiuri TV documentary, *"Higeki no Thai-Men Tetsudo (The Tragedy of the Thai-Burma Railway)"* broadcast on 17th July 1995; one of a series entitled *"Goju-nen Mae no Nattsu ni (Fifty Years Ago in the Summer)."*

⁵ The text is examined in two documentaries about the Thai Burma Railway. Each stresses rather different parts of the message. The introduction by the Yomiuri TV's *"Higeki no Thai-Men Tetsudo"* (op.cit.) stresses the words included in brackets. The other documentary skips over the bracketed part of the text and places more emphasis on the assimilation of Korea with Japan. The latter is an invaluable work made as a 1996 Senior Graduation Production for the Academy of Moving Images (*Nihon Eiga Gako*) in Tokyo, directed by Motohashi Yusuke: *"Chosenjin BC-Kyu Sempan no Kiroku (Records of the Korean B and C-class War Criminals)."* I am greatly indebted to former Seika South Korean student, Kim Sung Hun, for drawing my attention to this valuable production and for contacting the Director, to whom I am likewise indebted for kindly supplying, at his own expense, a video of the original Japanese version with English language subtitles. The importance of the production can be gauged by the fact that it has been broadcast in its entirety in Korean language translation on South Korean television, and it deserves a much wider audi-

ence in the West. (The Japan Academy of Moving Images is a film school in Kanagawa founded by film director, Imamura Shohei, and prominent film critic, Sato Tadao). While the Yomiuri TV document indicates that the original communication was a *telegram*, the Motohashi Yusuke production states that it was a *memorandum*. Another source terms it a *report*. (Utsumi Aiko: *"Prisoners of War in the Pacific War: Japan's Policy"* in Gavan McCormack & Hank Nelson (Eds): *"The Burma Thailand Railway;"* Allen & Unwin Pty. Ltd., Australia, & Silkworm Books, Chiangmai, 1993): p.73.

⁶ The figure of 3,000 has often come to be used to indicate the total number of Koreans involved in POW and other camp guard duties. But this 3,000 figure was *only* the number of Koreans enlisted by the first *gunzoku* recruitment drive and trained at the Noguchi Unit in June 1942. There is some evidence that many Koreans conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army (the Mobilisation Law was applied to the colony in the same year) were also involved in some areas in camp guard duties. The total number of Koreans used as camp guards is therefore unclear.

⁷ Motohashi Yusuke (Dir): *op.cit.* Not only were the contracted periods ignored, but also it seems that the 50-yen salary was largely unpaid. Yi Gil, a Korean *gunzoku* sent to the Dutch East Indies recalls, *"The guards' wages were also in (Japanese military) scrip, and most of our money was sent home for savings. They (the Japanese) didn't want us to have much (money) either. We got to keep only 10 yen."* Kasayama Yoshikichi (Yi Gil): *"Korean Guard"* in Haruko Taya Cook & Theodore F. Cook: *"Japan at War: An Oral History"* (New Press, 1992): p.116.

⁸ Detailed reports on the recruitment of Asian labourers were given in earlier articles in this series, *"Notes on the Thai-Burma Railway."* (See particularly Parts III, IV & V).

⁹ Yi Hak-Nae: *"The Man Between: A Korean Guard Looks Back"* in Gavan McCormack & Hank Nelson (Eds): *"The Burma-Thailand Railway;"* (Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd., Australia, & Silkworm Books, Chiangmai, 1993); p.121.

¹⁰ Julian Ryall: *"A 'Death Railway' Guard Tells His Story"* (Japan Times, 1st January 1996).

¹¹ Kasayama Yoshikichi (I Gil): *"Korean Guard"* in Haruko Taya Cook & Theodore F. Cook: *"Japan At War: An Oral History"* (New Press, 1992); p.113/114.

¹² Kim Wan Geun interview in Motohashi Yusuke: *op.cit.*

¹³ Yi Hak-Nae: *op.cit.*; p.121.

¹⁴ I Gil (Yi Gil): *op.cit.*; p.114. Yi goes on to relate *"I could speak a little English since I had studied composition and grammar at the YMCA in Seoul and taken conversation from an American missionary. My grandfather's antique store - the Korean Curio Shoppe, located just in front of the Chosen Hotel - was aimed at tourists, so English was crucial."*

¹⁵ Yi Hak-Nae interview in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir): *op. cit.* The documentary immediately follows Yi's statements about the Geneva Convention by an interview with former *Kempeitai* (Military Police) official, Nagase Takashi, in which he vehemently asserts, "*Never mind the Koreans! We Japanese ourselves were not taught about how to treat POWs! I was an MP who was supposed to take care of prisoners and I didn't know anything! So how could the other soldiers and Korean paramilitary members (gunzoku) possibly know about the Convention? Japanese people were not told about the Geneva Convention because of the Emperor system in Japan. The Imperial Armed Forces demanded the sacrifice of its soldiers. The Japanese army was meant to serve the Emperor and the soldiers had to die for him. They were not allowed to become prisoners. The Japanese military didn't even approve of POWs. If so, how could they teach you how to treat them? Who would fight to the death if they knew about the Geneva Convention and that they would be treated properly when captured as a POW?*"

¹⁶ This impression was confirmed in discussions with Prof. Utsumi Aiko, the Japanese scholar who has probably had the most interaction with the former Korean guards in Tokyo, some of whom she has come to know quite well. Yi Hak Nae, now president of a taxi company founded by these survivors in Tokyo, gives an impression of solid reliability and conscientious attention to detail; the sort of person for whom the English idiom, "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well" would surely apply! I am grateful to Prof. Utsumi for sharing her observations during a lengthy trip to Kanchanaburi in which I had been kindly invited to participate some four or five years ago.

¹⁷ By no means all of the Korean *gunzoku* were sent to the Thai-Burma Railway. Koreans were dispatched to various POW camps throughout Southeast Asia. No precise figures for the total number of Koreans enlisted as guards on the Thai-Burma Railway are available. Although there were also many Taiwanese enlisted as *gunzoku* there are no records of any having been sent to the Thai-Burma Railway.

¹⁸ Several POW accounts of the Railway include descriptions of Korean guards being beaten by their Japanese superiors. That recounted by Edward Boyle in *The Glasgow Herald* of 15th March 1974 was mentioned in "*Notes on the Thai Burma Railway, Part I; 'I remember Colonel Toosey once called a strike by the prisoners because a (Korean) guard beat me up. Saito got hold of the guard and beat the daylight out of him.'*" Another account of the same incident appears in Peter N. Davies: "*The Man Behind the Bridge: Colonel Toosey & the River Kwai*" (Athlone Press, London, 1991); p.110. "*A misunderstanding with a Korean guard led to Boyle (the camp's official interpreter) being struck with a rifle and suffering a broken arm and crushed ribs. Toosey refused to allow Boyle to return to his duties, which might well have involved him in serious injury. Boyle's absence had the effect of totally disrupting the organization of the working parties so, after failing to persuade Toosey to change his mind, the*

Japanese gave the Korean a severe beating... Thereafter the Koreans, at least, tended to confine themselves to verbal abuse."

- ¹⁹ Although a fictional account, the traits of reliability and efficiency on the job - often associated with Koreans - are movingly depicted in the story of a suicide attack by a Japanese army division defending an island in the South Pacific. Written by novelist and peace activist, Oda Makoto, the main character of "*Gyokusai (Broken Jewel)*" is an enlisted Korean soldier, Corporal Kon, - a thoroughly dependable and sturdy individual - and his interaction with the Japanese squad leader, Sergeant Nakamura. See Oda Makoto: "*Gyokusai (Broken Jewel)*" translated by Donald Keene, University of Columbia, 2003. The novel has been adapted into a radio play by Tina Pepler and broadcast by the BBC World Service on 6th August 2005.
- ²⁰ Utsumi Aiko: "*The Korean Guards on the Burma-Thailand Railway*" in Gavan McCormack & Hank Nelson (Eds): *op.cit.*: pp. 132/133.
- ²¹ Gavan McCormack: "*Apportioning the Blame: Australian Trials for Railway Crimes*" in Gavan McCormack & Hank Nelson (Eds): *op.cit.*: p.87.
- ²² Sir Edward Dunlop's remarks are quoted in Hugh V. Clarke: "*A Life for Every Sleeper: A Pictorial Record of the Burma-Thailand Railway*" (Allen & Unwin Australia Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1986): p.19.
- ²³ Robert Hardie: "*The Burma-Siam Railway: The Secret Dairy of Dr. Robert Hardie, 1942-45*" (Imperial War Museum & Quadrant Books, London, 1983): p.125.
- ²⁴ The engineer was Abe Hiroshi of the Fifth Railway Regiment. See Abe Hiroshi: "*Building the Burma-Siam Railroad*" & "*Death Row at Changi Prison*" Haruko Taya Cook & Theodore F. Cook: *op.cit.*: pp. 99-105 & 420-427.
- ²⁵ Sugano Kenichi interview in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir.): *op.cit.*
- ²⁶ Hugh Clarke: "*Last Stop Nagasaki*" (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984): p.65. Quoted in Gavan McCormack: *op.cit.*
- ²⁷ Yi Gil: "*Korean Guard*" in Haruko Taya Cook & Theodore F. Cook: *op.cit.*: pp.116/117.
- ²⁸ Julian Ryall: *op.cit.*
- ²⁹ Interview with Yi Hak Nae in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir.): *op.cit.*
- ³⁰ Lt.Col. W. Henderson: "*From China Burma India to the Kwai*" (O. & B. Publishers, Leon Junction, Texas, 1991): pp. 92-123.
- ³¹ It is clear from early comments in the manuscript (not included in this text) that Bingham had earlier served as a POW under the command of Col. Toosey, apparently at the famous "bridge-building" camp of Tha Makham), but his regimental affiliation is not mentioned in Henderson's lengthy excerpt.

³² In this point, Henderson is mistaken. Bingham did *not*, technically escape from the Thai-Burma Railway. In his sick condition, he had been transported by train from the Kanchanaburi area to Chiangmai in North Thailand, a journey of some 800 kilometres. The Thai-Burma Railway ran only from Nong Pladuk (where it joined the main Thai Southern line connecting with Bangkok) to Thanbyuzyat in Burma (Myanmar), where it linked into the main Burmese Southern line from Ye to Rangoon (Yangon). Chiangmai is the terminal station of the main Thai Northern line from Bangkok. The terrain and climate in Northern Thailand, though still very rough, is far more hospitable than that of the steamy jungles in the Kanchanaburi area. Several Japanese soldiers, following their defeat in the Imphal campaign (Assam, Northeast India) actually managed to straggle back over the hill tracks through Burma to Thailand in late 1944/1945. Bingham's group would, in order to reach Chungking, have to make a similar journey in the opposite direction. Bingham's attempted escape was not, therefore, from the Thai-Burma Railway, but from the Northern area of Japanese-controlled Thailand. Moreover, Bingham did not actually *escape!* Although the other members of his group, with the exception of Kanamura, were all killed, Bingham himself was recaptured by the Japanese military, and after a military trial in Bangkok, sent to Outram Road prison in Singapore, from where he was liberated at the war's end. The Japanese possibly did not intend to execute him (though, perhaps not surprisingly, they did execute Kanamura, the Korean guard).

³³ Presumably Lampang, a city not far distant from Chiangmai, located in North (*not* Northeast) Thailand.

³⁴ Bingham explains in his account that "*Parangs are thick, sturdy sticks. Usually they are of light weight, about four feet long, one to one and one-half inches thick, and can be quite deadly in close quarters fighting when used by well-trained people.*"

³⁵ Bingham mentions, "*The party now consisted of Sgt. Ponton, I.A.O.C.; Sgt. Soulby (Chota), I.A.O.C.; Sgt. Rennie, A. & S. H.; Sgt Bell, Royal Signals; Kanamura and myself.*" The abbreviations, I.A.O.C. stand for the (*British*) *Indian Army Ordnance Corps* and A. & S.H. for the *Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders*. The meaning of "*Chota*" is unclear - perhaps Sgt. Soulby's nickname?

³⁶ Probably Bingham's hearing of "*Baka Yaro!*" an uncomplimentary Japanese expletive, frequently used in IJA circles. Its nearest English equivalent might be "*bloody idiot!*"

³⁷ Bingham inserts at this point of his narrative the following remarks in brackets; "*Later, a Japanese officer told me that Kanamura thought that if he traveled alone, being already dressed in Jap uniform, should he have met a Jap patrol, he hoped that there would be some distance between them. To allay their suspicions, he would then call out in Japanese. This then would temporarily hold their fire, thus giving him time to melt into the jungle. But had we remained a party, as our majority decision decided, we would have had to fight it out.*"

³⁸ The name Kanamura is also a very plausible Japanese name to have been adopted by a Korean. Japanese names with *Kan-*, such as Kanamura, Kanai, Kaneda, Kaneko etc., although legitimate Japanese names, were often taken by Koreans as the first (Chinese) character of these names is the same as that for the Korean family name, Kim (one of the most common Korean family names and used by an extraordinarily large number of Koreans).

³⁹ Sir Edward Dunlop: *op.cit.*: pp. 316 & 364.

⁴⁰ Charles A. Fisher: *“Three Times a Guest”* (Cassell, 1979): pp.91/92. The correct romanisation for this guard’s Japanese name would more normally be rendered as “Konoe.” In the same work Fisher also observes, *“Many of those involved in guarding prisoners and other similarly menial tasks were Koreans, who before the war were very low paid... In fact, though not in theory, these Koreans were treated by the Japanese as distinctly inferior. The more the tide of war turned against Japan..., the more miserable became the lot of the unfortunate Koreans.”* (*op.cit.*: p.50).

⁴¹ Laurens van der Post: *“The Night of the Full Moon”* (Hogarth Press, 1971): pp. 49-65.

⁴² Yi Gil (Kasayama Yoshikichi): *op.cit.*: p.119. Yi also describes how he and his colleagues were sometimes able to beat up Japanese soldiers. *“The Japanese apologized and groveled when they didn’t have rifles.”*

⁴³ Unlike the more widely known Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal which dealt largely with important Japanese leaders regarded as responsible for causing the war, the B & C-Class War Criminals’ Tribunals were held throughout Southeast Asia and were specifically for those individuals who had indulged in cruel and inhumane treatment to either POWs or civilians in the areas under their control. The remarks about the trials contained in this article are appropriate only to these B & C Class War Criminals trials, and *not* to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal itself. (The latter is quite distinct and brings in other contentious issues that are still passionately debated today).

⁴⁴ All three informative articles can be found in Gavan McCormack & Hank Nelson (Eds): *op.cit.*

⁴⁵ Interview with John Williams in an NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Documentary, *“Cho Mun San no Issho; Singapore BC-Kyu Sempan Saiban (The Last Testament of Cho Mun San; Singapore B & C-Class War Crimes Trials)”* broadcast on 15th August 1991. Williams’ original English statement is unintelligible, having been superimposed with a voice-over Japanese language translation. The remarks above have been retranslated from the Japanese; the original English wording may have varied slightly, but the overall sense remains the same. This thoughtful documentary attempts to address Japanese, rather than Western, responsibility for the fate of the Korean guards. It is based on the diary of Cho Mun San (who adopted the Japanese name of Hirohara Moritsune), a Korean guard sent to the Railway from a well-to-do family of gin-

seng merchants from Kaesong in today's North Korea. Cho, after being convicted in a highly suspect trial (see Gavan McCormack: *op. cit.*), was finally executed in Changi prison, Singapore, on 16th September 1947. While imprisoned in "P Hall," Changi's death row, he had written a diary until within a few minutes before his execution. This was smuggled out of the prison by friends, according to NHK, hidden in cigarette packets.

⁴⁶ Yi Hak Nae: *op. cit.* Yi's death sentence was subsequently commuted after some 8 months' waiting to 20 years' imprisonment and he was later transferred from Singapore to Sugamo Prison in Tokyo where he remained until his eventual release in 1956.

⁴⁷ Interview with Sir Edward Dunlop: NHK Documentary: *op. cit.* Dunlop himself had refused to be personally involved in war crimes trials. His frequent confrontations with Yi Hak Nae (Hiromura Kakurai), who received the nickname of "*The Lizard*," can be found in Sir Edward Dunlop: *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Utsumi Aiko: *op. cit.*: p.129.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Julian Ryall: *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Interview with Yi Hak Nae in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir.): *op. cit.* Yi also talks of another Korean guard who had remained in Japan, Pak Chan Ho. Pak went literally mad at the shock of being labeled a war criminal and spent the 44 years until his death in a mental hospital.

⁵¹ Japan Times: "*Korea, Taiwan Veteran Redress Bill OK'd*;" 19th May 2000. The payments were to have started in April 2001.

⁵² Information from several former camp guards in South Korea, interviewed in the NHK Documentary: *op. cit.*

⁵³ Interview with Pak Yun Sang in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir.): *op. cit.* Pak's wife drowned herself in a neighbourhood pond.

⁵⁴ Interview with Yi Hak Nae in Motohashi Yusuke (Dir.): *op. cit.*