Where are the Victims? Remembrances of the Massacre of Koreans during the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake

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Abstract

On September 1, 1923, a massive earthquake of 7.9 magnitude struck Japan, damaging most of the Kantō region. While Japan had to recover from the devastation caused by the earthquake, it also faced a challenge: to record the violence against Korean migrants by Japanese during the earthquake. Despite the massacre of several thousands of Koreans, the Japanese government has refused to investigate the incident for over ninety years. This paper examines the relationship between the remembrances of Korean massacre among Japanese by tracing school children's essays written after the earthquake, the government's earthquake records, and the oral interviews conducted in postwar years. Combined with an analysis on the modifications in children's essays and the narrative patterns in the oral interviews, it highlights the indifference of Japanese people toward the victims of massacre and argues that the Japanese government *and* its people in general have deliberately denied responsibility of the massacre.

Keywords:

The Great Kantō Earthquake, Korean residents in Japan, massacre, *jikeidan* (vigilantes), memory, ethnic discrimination

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Introduction

In June 1960, the Cabinet Office of the government of Japan approved the establishment of "Disaster Prevention Day" to deepen the understanding of natural disasters and to ensure that the people and the national and local governments are prepared for unpredictable emergencies.[1] The day was set on September 1, connected to the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 that left catastrophic damages to Japan's "imperial capital" and major cities in the Kantō region. The 7.9 magnitude earthquake and its five strong aftershocks continued over two days. Many people were crushed to death or buried under the wreckage of the collapsed buildings. Those who had survived from the initial waves died from the massive fire that started soon after the earthquake. Over 105,000 were dead or missing with more than 370,000 houses destroyed.[2] Reflecting on the calamity of the earthquake, the Director Gen-

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1 Science and Technology Agency's 10th Anniversary Commemoration Event Preparation Committee, *The 10-Year History of Science and Technology Agency* (Tokyo: Science and Technology Agency's 10th Anniversary Commemorative Association, 1966), 145. In May 1982, the government established a Disaster Prevention Week, including September 1.

2 Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, ed., *The Record of Taishō Earthquake*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, 1926): 287, 305, 307.

eral for Disaster Management has underscored the importance of preventative measures and guided local governments to prepare for natural disasters and emergencies. Schools, communities, and business offices are encouraged to implement disaster prevention drills at both national and local levels on the Disaster Prevention Day.

Compared with the amount of attention given to the earthquake, what is missing in the public discourse on the Great Kantō Earthquake is the terror of man-made disaster. The Korean massacre that took thousands of lives has been hardly discussed at the Disaster Prevention Day events. Immediately after the earthquake, groundless and false rumors regarding plunders and riots by Koreans quickly circulated and caused "Korean disturbance" (朝鮮騒ぎ *Chōsen sawagi*) that greatly agitated the Japanese. Consequently, Japanese civilians, police, and military captured, attacked and in most cases brutally murdered Korean residents, who had migrated to Japan after the annexation of Korea. While the victims also included Chinese and Japanese who had been mistaken as Koreans along with the socialist Japanese, the number of Korean victims was the highest.[3] Although fires and collapsed buildings forced people to flee, "Korean disturbance" occupied Japanese minds, dominated media coverage of the time, and left vivid images in their memories for several decades.

Since the 1960s, scholars and historians in Japan laid a foundation of research and data collection in this topic. Most prior research has investigated the causes of the massacre in context of Japan's colonization and imperialism, focusing on racism, conflicts over immigration and labor, and newly formed Japan's modern national identity.[4] Studies in English also

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[3] Byŏng-dong Kŭm, ed., *School Children's Essays Related to Korean Massacre*, vol. 1: 15, 601-3. Historical Document Related to the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake (Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 1963).

[4] See, for example, Dŏk-sang Kang, *The Great Kantō Earthquake* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975); Bunzō Katō, *Kameido Incident and Hidden Power Crime* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1991); Shōichi Matsuo, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and Martial Law* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2003); Shōji Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre* (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 2011); Yūko Fujino, *People's History of Cities and Riots* (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2015).

add different dimensions to understand why the massacre took place. Among those, Michael Allen's research posits that colonial assimilation policy and ethnic tension between Japanese and Koreans generated an explosion of violence. He argues that the pre-existing negative and hostile images of Koreans being held by the Japanese public due to the nation's initial failure in assimilation projects prompted Japanese to specifically target Koreans.[5] Sonia Ryang takes an anthological approach to explain Japanese racism toward Koreans through the framework of Japan's modern national sovereignty, highlighting the lack of an official household registry for Koreans in Japan.[6] Recent studies contextualize the causes of massacre by focusing on the logic and motivations of the assailants, instead of emphasizing the state's manipulation to induce its citizens or the racial and ethnic prejudices by the Japanese as a whole. Highlighting the conflicts between the lower class laborers and the migrant workers, Byung Wook Jung's comparative study on the massacre of Koreans by the Japanese and the massacre of Chinese by the Koreans in Gyeonseong in 1931 suggests, "there are other dimensions to these events that cannot be reduced to nationalism or anti-foreignism."[7]

Although existing research has discussed the causes of the massacre from national and transnational perspectives, research on the representations and descriptions of the massacre after the earthquake remains limited. Moreover, few scholars have investigated the relationship between children's essays written after the earthquake, the government records of the time, and the collections of oral interviews after the war. This study exam-

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5 J. Michael Allen, "The Price of Identity: The 1923 Kanto Earthquake and Its Aftermath," *Korean Studies* 23 (1996): 64-93.

6 Sonia Ryang, "The Great Kantō Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans in 1923: Notes on Japan's Modern National Sovereignty," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 731-48; Sonia Ryang, "The Tongue That Divided Life and Death. The 1923 Tokyo Earthquake and the Massacre of Koreans," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 5, no. 9 (September 3, 2007): 1-13.

7 Byung Wook Jung, "Migrant Labor and Massacres: A Comparison of the 1923 Massacre of Koreans and Chinese during the Great Kanto Earthquake and the 1931 Anti-Chinese Riots and Massacre of Chinese in Colonial Korea," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 22 (March 2017): 45.

ines the expressions relating to the massacre in children's essays, and it explores how the editorial intervention's methods corresponded to the representations of the "Korean disturbance" in the official records by state and local authorities. We have chosen *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster* (子供の震災記 *Kodomo no shinsai ki*) because it has two different versions: the published version and the original version. Compared to the original essays, the published version indicates editorial interventions based on government censorship. The authors of *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster* were elementary school children in Tokyo, aged six to twelve-year-old, and they represented a generation that was greatly affected by nationalism and emerging militarism taught at schools. They were around their twenties during Japan's accelerated militarism in the 1930s, experienced the Pacific War in their thirties, and contributed to rebuilding postwar Japan at the prime of their youth.[8] Considering that the interviewees in the oral interview were in this age group, this study further traces the representations of the massacre through oral interviews that were conducted in the postwar years. Comparing the depictions of the massacre in the government records, the censored and original children's essays, and the remembrances of the incidents in recent oral interviews, this study will provide a more nuanced understanding of Japan's evasive attitude toward the massacre of Koreans over time.

Background

The spread of rumors during a natural disaster was common, because a temporary cutoff of public services and communication escalated people's fear and confusion. A study by J. Prasad shows that false or exaggerated information appeared when the 8.0 magnitude Bihar-Nepal earthquake in 1934 took more than 12,000 lives.[9] The widely circulated rumors during the Bihar-Nepal earthquake originated from "legend, socially important be-

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[8] Kŭm, *School Children's Essays Related to Korean Massacre*, vol. 1: 1.

[9] J. Prasad, "The Psychology of Rumour: A Study Relating to the Great Indian Earthquake of 1934," *British Journal of Psychology* 26 (1935): 1-15.

liefs, and from superstitions."[10] Prasad posits that rumors serve "a social purpose" and are immune from criticisms, because they represent collective mentality, instead of serving the interests of individuals.[11] Negative effects of rumors at the time of emergency have posed serious problems over time. The proliferation of unverified information continues to challenge the present society, as misinformation and malicious contents in social media platforms at a time of crisis disrupt the flow of accurate information and threaten public safety.[12] In 1923, Japan, the rumors drove Japanese to irrationally search, detain, and attack innocent Koreans. The peculiarity of Japanese rumors was that the contents mainly focused on the imagined crimes and violence committed by Koreans. When the earthquake happened, the typical rumors—Koreans were poisoning wells, bombing buildings, plundering houses, assaulting women, and plotting rebellions against Japanese—quickly spread.

The Japanese word for rumor, contextual to this massacre, is *ryūgen* (流言) that can be translated as a "false" rumor, or canard. While a Japanese word equivalent to an English word "rumor" also exists as *uwasa* (噂), the press, authorities, and public used *ryūgen*. Osamu Hiroi, a sociologist, and the forerunner of the research on disaster information, explained that *ryūgen* has social and political functions and emerges during a crisis, whereas *uwasa* is related to someone's private and/or social activities circulated in time of peace. Hiroi posits that *ryūgen* reflects the strong emotions including worries, fear, and wishes that have been shared by the people, and its content is presented in a way similar to that of headlines in media reports. The nature of its "reporting" style is the reason that individuals conveying *ryūgen* rarely felt the need to check the facts, even though it presented no reliable evidences. As a result, the contents of *ryūgen* grew increasingly specific and spread quickly as people evacuated to different

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[10] Ibid., 13.

[11] Ibid., 8, 13, 15.

[12] Social Media Working Group for Emergency Services and Disaster Management, and Department of Homeland Security, *Countering False Information on Social Media in Disasters and Emergencies* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2018).

locations. Taking a similar view with Prasad, Hiroi considered *ryūgen* a public opinion that was disguised as a report for which no one was responsible.[13]

Furthermore, the socialist movement and the government's suppression of the radicals in the early summer of 1923 fostered a negative image of Koreans among the public as the police and military authorities had suspected a connection between Japanese socialists and Korean labor organizations.[14] Japanese categorized Koreans into *futei senjin* (不逞鮮人 malcontent Koreans) or *zenryō na senjin* (善良な鮮人 good-natured Koreans) even before the earthquake to emphasize the Korean members of labor and socialist organizations' negative images. In particular, the severe suppression of Korean and Japanese socialists on May Day, in 1923, laid the foundation of a much greater suppression of Koreans and suspected socialists by police officers during the earthquake.[15] The murders of the anarchist Sakae Ōsugi, his wife, and six-year-old nephew by the military officers on September 16 were a striking example of the assaults against Japanese socialists and communists by the police and military, in the aftermath of the earthquake. The authorities claimed that the radicals instigated Koreans to riot by taking advantage of the chaotic situation; hence, the image of Koreans was enforced as "the transmitters of the socialist virus" among the public.[16]

The devastation of the earthquake fueled a mass hysteria and the images of *futei senjin* as hostile and violent Koreans dominated the contents of *ryūgen*. The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a command to the police departments nationwide to strictly investigate Koreans, and it ordered townspeople to organize *jikeidan* (自警団 vigilantes) for guard duty against Koreans. Meanwhile, some *jikeidan* were already self-formed or semi-forcibly organized by the influential leaders in the community, such as

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13 Osamu Hiroi, *Ryūgen to dema no shakaigaku* [The sociology of *ryūgen* and demagogue] (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, Ltd., 2001), 34-37, 67-72, 94.

14 Michael Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 78.

15 Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 46-50.

16 Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, 5th (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 243-44; Weiner, *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan*, 78.

landlords. While the formation of *jikeidan* also aimed to provide relief measures to its community, the state's immediate announcements to warn against potential Korean rebels implied that *ryūgen* were validated as *facts* to the citizens.[17] Moreover, on September 2, the government imposed martial law in Tokyo city that carried out at an unprecedented speed; it expanded to Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba prefectures by September 7, and remained effective until November 15. While the enforcement of martial law intended to preemptively minimize the occurrences of social disorders, it also aimed to guard against potential outrage by socialists and *futei senjin*.[18]

Jikeidan usually consisted of fire brigade, the urban poor who were manual laborers, the reservists, and the members of young men's associations. The increased presence of military led to the reservists taking a leadership with *jikeidan*. Wearing military uniforms and acting like active duty soldiers, they contributed to creating a warlike ambience in communities.[19] As the confusion at the natural disaster and the *ryūgen* about attacks by Koreans developed extreme fear and anxiety among the public, those who participated in *jikeidan* started taking it on themselves to protect people in their communities. Simultaneously, the martial law placed the local police under military control and effectively incorporated *jikeidan* into the emergency system as the armed organizations to enforce vigilance.[20] It gave the ordinary people "authorization" to regard Koreans as enemies of the nation and to attack and kill them for the sake of the community and nation. An increasing sense of solidarity and responsibility with the nation resulted in escalating hostility and murderous urge toward Koreans.[21] By the night of

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17 Matsuo, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and Martial Law* 37; Masataka Tanaka, "The Great Kantō Earthquake and the Regional Activities and Current Situation of Mourning and Research," *Journal of Ohara Institute for Social Research* 669 (July 2014): 23.

18 Shinobu Ōe, *Martial Law* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1978), 125-26.

19 Tadatoshi Fujii, "Military Personnel Association: Organization and Mobilization," *Modern History Quarterly* 9 (September 20, 1978): 260.

20 Matsuo, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and Martial Law* 21.

21 Fujino, *People's History of Cities and Riots*, 280-81; Fujii, "Military Personnel Association: Organization and Mobilization" 260.

September 1, many *jikeidan* began setting up checkpoints and passwords to distinguish the townspeople from the outsiders, challenging people's identities without warning, or chasing and detaining "suspicious" people.[22] To identify Koreans, some *jikeidan* forced people to say the names of successive Emperors or phrases in Japanese that many Koreans found difficult to pronounce. Once recognized as Koreans, they were killed by weapons like fire hooks, swords, bamboo spears, and metal or wooden sticks.[23] The victimization of Chinese and Japanese with regional dialects illustrate the irrationality of *jikeidan* that created greater confusion and increased fear.[24] Initially, the police and military urged the public to protect their communities from potential Korean attacks. However, after the government realized that no actual violence by the Koreans was confirmed, the police began to announce that *ryūgen* were false and stopped *jikeidan*'s attacks on Koreans since "a majority of them were 'good' Koreans."[25] This change of the authority's stand, which still implied existence of *futei senjin* and insufficiently denied "Korean disturbance," created further confusions. In some areas, *jikeidan* attacked police stations where Koreans were sheltered, resulting in the arrests and persecutions of some *jikeidan*.[26] The violence against Koreans, which started with rumor and involved both the authorities and civilians amidst the unpreceded disaster, lasted about ten days.[27] The following

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[22] Tokyo Shinagawa district, ed., *The Collection of Experience Records at the Great Kantō Earthquake* (Tokyo: Toppan Printing, Co., Ltd., 1978), 17, 19.

[23] So Pae, ed., *Pictorial Reports: Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake* (Tokyo: Kage Shobō, 1988), 13; Korea University, *The Truth and Reality of Korean Massacre in the Great Kantō Earthquake* (Tokyo: The Korea University Research Materials Editorial Committee on Korea, 1963), 50-53.

[24] "Confusion after the Earthquake," *Kokumin Shinbun*, October 21, 1923, Reprinted in Yamada, ed., Sources for Newspaper Coverage of Korean Massacre, vol. 2: 22-23; Korea University, *The Truth and Reality of Korean Massacre in the Great Kantō Earthquake*, 64-65.

[25] Tokyo Municipal Office, ed., *The Record of Tokyo Earthquake Disaster*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tokyo Municipal Office, 1926): 6-8.

[26] Ibid., 1: 11-12; Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 90-92. For the analysis on the government's intentions and the validity of *jikeidan*'s court cases, see Ibid., 87-98.

[27] Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 73-74.

sections will examine the descriptions of the "Korean disturbance," the representations of Koreans, and how they had become vanished victims in the records.

Prohibited Expressions in the Children's Essays

When schools in the affected region gradually resumed, it was a common classroom activity for teachers to assign students to write essays about their experience during the earthquake. Those essays often depicted the details of "Korean disturbance" and a spirit of mutual helpfulness among Japanese during a chaotic situation. Some schools and local institutions published essay collections or kept them in local libraries. Unlike other collections of children's essays, however, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster* had two versions—an original version and a published version after censorship. In the preface, the teachers explained that children's sensitivities and compassions toward the victims of the disaster expressed in the essays urged them to publish and preserve "jewels of children's morality that sparkled in a time of calamity."[28] The teachers confirmed that they had not edited children's essays and the students wrote all the words.[29]

According to the colophons and stamps in the two versions of *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*. One has a seal of approval by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the front page and was published in July 1924. The other has no approval seal but has two stamps in its front page, indicating that it was banned from publication and was transferred to the Imperial Library from the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1937 (see figure 1 and figure 2).[30] In prewar Japan, the government censored all publications based on the publication law in 1893, which required publishers to

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[28] Elementary Education Society, ed., *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version (Tokyo: Meguro Shoten, 1924), 6.

[29] Ibid., 7.

[30] Front page and colophon in Elementary Education Society, ed., *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version (Tokyo: Meguro Shoten, 1924); Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version.

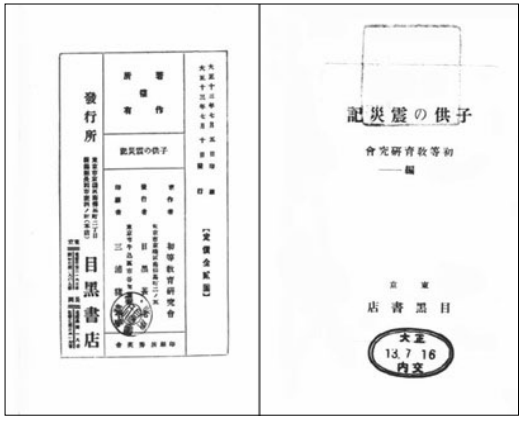

Figure 1. Front Cover and Colophon of the Published *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*

Figure 2. Front Cover and Colophon of the Original *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*

submit two copies of a book to the Ministry of Home Affairs before its publication. The government categorized disapproved books and prohibited them from publication, and a copy was stored in the Imperial Library.[31]

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[31] Preface, National Diet Library Collecting Division, ed., *List of Prohibited Books in National Dietary Library before 1945* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1980).

Teachers had evidently made "corrections" in the content of the original version of *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disater* to pass the censorship, and then they published the modified version in 1924. Therefore, even though the editors declared, "Nothing is better than children's essays, in terms of depicting 'veracity' of events" in its preface, children's real experiences and emotions were altered in it.[32]

Comparison between the published (modified) and original (prohibited) versions revealed the images of Koreans and the representations of the Japanese that the state desired to record in history. In the original version, students often captured the brutality of *jikeidan* and endless fear and irrational mentality of Japanese people, enhanced by the intensity of a warlike atmosphere and emotional disruption. The published version, however, replaced the original words, phrases, or sentences in children's essays with different expressions. For instance, sentences like, "I continuously heard horrible *ryūgen*, such as Koreans are setting fires one after another," were changed to "I continuously heard horrible things one after another."[33] One student recorded, "Fire and earthquake stopped on September 3. But we had a very tough time due to Korean disturbance." The published version omitted the second sentence.[34] In the original essay by an 8th grader Taka Andō, titled "Horrible *ryūgen*," the narrative tone and details of the event captured the irrational and frightened behavior of Japanese, and her observations contained graphic descriptions. On the 2nd day, nothing surprised her more than the "Korean disturbance." She wrote,

> Here and there, the reservists and local volunteers tied wooden sticks to their own hands and went on guard. [The reservists shouted,] "They just went into the fourth street!" "This way!" "Over there!" "[They are] in

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[32] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 1.

[33] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version, 340; Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 340.

[34] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version, 96; Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 96.

> the graveyard!" "No, I saw them here!" Everyone looked panicked and confused. Someone told me, "Koreans will set fires, so guard your back door," and "Korean women will throw poisons in our wells, so please have someone guard your well." My heart ached whenever I heard such things. . . . The Korean disturbance that frightened people lasted four to five days. One time, someone said, "I just saw Koreans were killed," and "I've heard that about thirty Koreans are captured in Otowa." According to the person who witnessed the killing, *jikeidan* blindfolded Koreans and then shot them dead, counting "one, two, three" from a distance of three to four meters. When they couldn't die by the shot and moaned with pain, people gathered to the site in droves and shouted, "Let me beat them, please," and "Let me punch them a little bit, please." Those Koreans eventually died because everyone beat them up.[35]

The original words used to indicate Koreans in the essay, such as *senjin* (鮮人 a disparaging term for Koreans), were replaced with *zainin* (criminal) and *dorobō* (thief); the alternative terms, without ethnic connotations, replaced the words that directly depicted Koreans. The Koreans' actions in *ryūgen* were also altered to the ones that sound less violent and harmful. For instance, throwing "poisons into wells" was changed to "do mischief on wells," and the passages including the conversations about people's desire to attack the assaulted victims were completely omitted in the published version.[36]

Replacement of a passage or an entire essay with photographs was another method to eliminate students' direct descriptions of the victims. For example, a photograph of a national sport hall that was destroyed by fire replaced the following essay.[37] Atsushi Watanabe, a 6th grader, wrote,

> On the 2nd day, many people gathered in Ichigaya, making a great noise.

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[35] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version, 304.

[36] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 304.

[37] Ibid., 144.

> So, I went there to see. I found a Korean crying as he was kicked and beaten by a wood [stick]. Then, one soldier ran toward him. As I was watching and wondering what he would do, he rescued the Korean from the mob and told them that he was one of the Japanese nationals as well, so it is a pity to bully him like this. Then, the soldier took the Korean and went away. . . [That] Korean was suspected of setting fires because he had tobacco and matches. Five to six Koreans were caught on that day. Among them, one person was captured on the way to a friend's house. Another person was half-killed and taken by the police. I thought that the previous soldier was a wise and reasonable person. As *jikeidan* was formed, everyone had become able to sleep without worrying about Korean disturbance. I have heard that about 300 Koreans were killed.[38]

In this student's narrative, the detailed observation of the event emphasized the reality of the unreasonable treatments toward the Koreans. While Watanabe felt that *jikeidan*'s behaviors were irrational compared to the soldier's action, he had no doubt that Koreans were causing trouble. Being terrified by malicious behaviors of Koreans told in *ryūgen*, he approved *jikeidan* as guardians of his community. Moreover, the soldier's logic behind rescuing a Korean on the ground because he was also a Japanese national further highlights the penetration of colonial hierarchical relationship between Japanese and Koreans underlying the assimilation process of Koreans. Watanabe did not approve of the soldier's action based on his sympathetic feeling toward the victim; he echoed the soldier's logic of colonial superiority. An insertion of a photograph to replace this episode not only renders a contrived look to the essay but also conceals the context that expressed the complex relationship between Japanese and Koreans within the Korean assimilation policy, under Japan's colonialism.

Photographs of the imperial family also appeared in the middle of children's essays. A 7th grader Kiyoshi Ishigami explained that his neigh-

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[38] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version, 140-46.

bors captured three to four Koreans and took them somewhere. He wrote,

> Koreans were asking in awkward Japanese, "I didn't do anything wrong. Where are you going to take me?" Then, my neighbors, holding metal and wooden sticks in their hands, responded to them, "Wherever. Just walk!" and dragged them somewhere. When I returned home, I heard a noise from outside. My neighbors said that a Korean ran away to a mountain behind our town, and everyone chased after him. . . . During the night, my neighbors captured Koreans here and there.[39]

A photograph of an empress consoling the sufferers replaced this section in the middle of the essay left a blank to Ishigami's vivid rendering of observed facts, without which his essay was incomplete.[40] Another example was found in an essay by a 6th grade boy, Yōzō Manabe. Called to support *jikeidan*, young boys like Manabe had to take weapons and guarded their houses against Koreans while their fathers and elder brothers went on patrol. Manabe expressed his state of anxiety in his essay.

> . . . .as night advances, it became complete darkness. . . "Bang, bang, bang." The terrifying sound of gunfire broke the darkness. I thought, "It must be a Korean's pistol. I guess they are almost there. What should I do if they come here? I am a Japanese man. [I can fight against] 100 or 200 Koreans. . . ." I made up my mind and gripped my metal stick tightly. People went by as they yelled out "Beat rebellious Koreans to death!" "Kill lawless Koreans all!" What will happen to us? Are we heading to a happy way or an unhappy way? We are at the crossroad of fate.[41]

This passage captured his feeling of danger against the "rebellious Kore-

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[39] Ibid., 299.

[40] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 299.

[41] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, original version, 246-47.

ans," when the adults around him were desperately trying to find Koreans. His final phrase sharply grasped the people's hysteria, as if they were at the boundary between killing and being killed. Nevertheless, the published version replaced his intense fear and distress along with the madness of Japanese with a single photograph of Hirohito, who was a prince regent at the time, observing the damaged area.[42] The sudden insertion of the members of imperial family's photographs produced unexpectedness and awkwardness to children's essays. The imperial presence possibly indicated the forceful power used to eliminate the victims and the records of children's psychological fear and potential hatred toward Koreans, which was developed by the hysteria. We shall look at the implication of the imperial presence in the section on the government documents.

Besides the scenes of atrocities on innocent people, the original essays contained expressions suggesting that the Japanese were terrified by their own words and the ambience of grave delusion. The essays also mirrored the indifference to the lives of the victims. As the examples show, "Korean disturbance" and *ryūgen* occupied children's minds, often more than the devastations caused by the earthquake. Even after the disaster, the impact of *jikeidan*'s ruthless violence and the images of assaulted Koreans reflected in a children's popular play, "a game of *jikeidan*" (自警団遊び *jikeidan asobi*, see figure 3). By mimicking *jikeidan*'s behaviors based on their observations and experiences, children imitated the adults. One of the pictorial reports in *Miyako shinbun* by an artist, Yumeji Takehisa (竹久夢二), published in 1923, described a group of children playing *jikeidan* wherein one child was forced to play a Korean and was bullied. The report began with a dialogue of children; a group pointed at one kid, Man-chan, saying, "Man-chan, your face doesn't look like a Japanese," "Let's make Man-chan an enemy." Then, the kid refused, saying, "No, I don't want to. You are going to poke me with a bamboo spear, aren't you?" This kid was eventually chased and beaten till he cried. Yumeji warned the public

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[42] Elementary Education Society, *Children's Essays on the Earthquake Disaster*, published version, 246-47.

Figure 3. "A game of *jikeidan*" by Yumeji Takehisa in *Miyako Shinbun* on September 19, 1923.

through his comment to those children; "Children, let's stop brandishing sticks and playing *jikeidan*."[43] The prevalence of a game of *jikeidan* among children indicated the social norm that any Korean had become the subject of bullying by the Japanese.

Some students used words, such as "dream" and "dreamlike" to convey their extreme tensions and fears that they had never experienced. Nonetheless, children's descriptions of the events around massacres are strictly objective, and the distinctive characteristic in their essays was the general absence of a humane feeling toward the Korean victims. In those children's memories, the massacre was recorded as a horrible event. However, much like Yumeji's warning on "a game of *jikeidan*," the lives of people who were killed without reason do not appear to be significant in children's minds. While these essays show the reality of the brutal attacks, the victims had already been sunk into oblivion in their recorded and non-recorded memories.

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[43] Yumeji Takehisa, "Tokyo Sainan Gashin [Pictorial Reports on the Disaster in Tokyo]," *Miyako Shinbun*, September 19, 1923.

Omissions of the Massacre in the Government Publications

As early as 1924, various levels and regions of public institutions began publishing the earthquake's disaster records. The publications, including *The Record of Taishō Great Earthquake and Fire* (大正大震火災誌 *Taishō daishin kasai shi*, 1924), *The Record of Tokyo Earthquake Disaster* (東京震災録 *Tokyo shinsai roku*, 1926), and *The Records of Taishō Earthquake* (大正震災志 *Taishō shinsai shi*, 1926), have been considered as the main disaster records of the earthquake.[44] In particular, *The Records of Taishō Earthquake* has served as the official record for the earthquake with its comprehensive coverages of the disaster in the Kantō region.[45] Published by the Ministry of Home Affairs, it was intended for the public to preserve the memories and transmit the lessons learned from the disaster to "warn and guide future generations."[46] Thus, it reflected the government's purpose or intention on how the history of earthquake are remembered.

Throughout more than two thousand pages in two volumes, *The Records of Taishō Earthquake* contains chapters on the prefectures in the Kantō region, detailing a wide range of physical damages, human loss, and the conditions of the sufferers. However, neither a chapter nor a section reports the massacre, and the references to the incidents related to "Korean disturbance" were ambiguous. Contrary to the fact that the military and police were involved in actual violence, the chapters for Tokyo and Tokyo city briefly described the situation as "appalling sight" due to a menacing attitude of *jikeidan* and highlighted the security and protective measures that the police or military *had provided for* Koreans to protect them from

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[44] Metropolitan Police Department, ed., *The Record of Taishō Great Earthquake and Fire* (Tokyo: Metropolitan Police Department, 1924); Tokyo Municipal Office, *The Record of Tokyo Earthquake Disaster*; Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Record of Taishō Earthquake*.

[45] Junichi Miyama, "Archiving Natural Disasters in Early-Modern Japan: The Role of Governmental Organizations in Compiling Records of Natural Disasters," *The Bulletin of the National Instituted of Japanese Literature* 13 (March 2017): 22-27.

[46] Preface, Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Record of Taishō Earthquake*.

jikeidan. For instance, Tokyo city spared several pages for providing examples of *ryūgen*, describing how the police maintained social order by detaining Koreans and strictly controlling *jikeidan*. While the report emphasized that frenzied *jikeidan* even "killed and wounded innocent citizens [Japanese]," the words and phrases to explain *jikeidan*'s actions against Koreans were obscure. Without using the direct expressions like "kill" or "murder," the report concealed the atrocities committed by *jikeidan*. Moreover, the contributory factor for *jikeidan*'s "strong hatred for Koreans" and "violence (against Koreans) without reason" was pointed to "some *futei senjin*'s recklessness."[47] Instead of attempting to record what had happened to the victims, it focused on the number of protected Koreans and the tremendous efforts by the police to convince the public to regain calm. Further, it emphasized that people's antagonistic feeling toward Koreans turned to "beautiful sympathy" by the middle of September, and Koreans "became grateful and shed tears of happiness for relief supplies provided by *jikeidan*."[48]

Similarly, the key subjects of the narrative in Yokohama city and Kanagawa Prefecture's reports, where most of the atrocities had occurred, were the strenuous relief efforts by the police, often highlighting the specific officers who toiled for conducting relief measures. In more than four hundred pages of reports for Yokohama city and Kanagawa Prefecture, neither *ryūgen*, *jikeidan*, nor Koreans appeared except in the context that the officers warned *jikeidan* against rashness, denied *ryūgen*, and protected Koreans.[49] Without mentioning "Korean disturbance," it blamed the complete chaotic situation that facilitated crimes on the lack of food supply and insufficient police force.[50] These reports had only a few passages discussing the spread of *ryūgen*, confusion, and an agitated atmosphere and violence. The sections concluded that the effect of the martial law and the police and military enforcement contributed to pacifying the public feeling

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[47] Ibid., 1: 385-87.

[48] Ibid., 1: 387-88.

[49] Ibid., 1: 574, 723-24.

[50] Ibid., 1: 604.

and restoring the social order, by the middle of September.[51] The Chiba and Saitama prefectures' reports focused on the relief activities by young men's associations and reservists, whose members often overlapped with *jikeidan* and committed atrocities against Koreans.[52] Saitama prefecture's report completely dismissed events surrounding "Korean disturbance," and Chiba prefecture noted that it omitted "misconducts" by *jikeidan* in its report.[53]

The publications of the regional governments had the same tendencies: the omissions and equivocations of violence and the promotion of the authority for maintaining public peace and protecting Koreans. Both Tokyo city and Kanagawa Prefecture briefly reported the violence by the desperate populace without mentioning the murder cases in their own publications. In particular, Kanagawa Prefecture reported an unrealistically small number of crimes, violence, and disobedience committed by the public; four reports indicating the arrests for violating "law against false rumors" and eight for homicides.[54] Similar to the aforementioned examples, the military and police were the leading entities regulating *jikeidan*; they distributed flyers to stop blindly committing violence against the "good" Koreans, detained and protected them from irrational public, and even arranged for them to return to their homes in the Korean peninsula.[55]

Unlike the reports of the areas where most massacres took place, the chapter for Yamanashi prefecture in *The Records of Taishō Earthquake* ex-

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[51] Ibid., 1: 735.

[52] Ibid., 1: 1003, 1005, 1045-46, 1159, 1166, 1171-72. For the details on violence against Koreans in Chiba and Saitama Prefectures, see Executive Committee of the Research on Korean Massacre in Chiba Prefecture, ed., *People Who Were Killed without Reason: The Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1983); Executive Committee of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake, ed., *The Hidden History: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean Massacre in Saitama* (Ōmiya: Executive Committee of the 60th anniversary of the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake, 1987).

[53] Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Record of Taishō Earthquake*, 1: 1047.

[54] Kanagawa Prefecture, ed., *The Record of Kanagawa Prefecture Earthquake Disaster* (Yokohama: Kanagawa Prefecture, 1927): 6-7, 10-11.

[55] Tokyo Municipal Office, *The Record of Tokyo Earthquake Disaster* 1: 2, 7-10.

plained the careful judgements made by the prefectural police officers regarding *ryūgen*, and their measures to control *jikeidan*. The report stated that "out of extreme fear and the spread of Korean riots," "the formation of vigilantes" became apparent, and such phenomenon "did not differ from the Tokyo area."[56] Indicating details of the Koreans' number and locations in the prefecture, it also discussed how the authority had protected them. Moreover, anticipating further confusions and uncontrollable mob violence, the prefectural government issued six "warnings" and one "instruction for security guards" as early as September 3. While the reports in Tokyo and Kanagawa never denied the instances of the crimes by Koreans described in *ryūgen*, these "warnings" and "instruction" for *jikeidan* mentioned in Yamanashi prefecture's report suggested that *ryūgen* were groundless.[57] As these examples show, the regions not affected by the massacre disclosed the official records to emphasize the successful measures by the administrative office against *jikeidan*, while the regional reports where the massacre happened avoided clarifying the information about "Korean disturbance" and incidents related to *ryūgen*. In either case, however, the reports primarily focused on the different situations and positions of Japanese, who provoked "Korean disturbance" out of their *ryūgen*, to defend what Japanese had done to unnamed Koreans; victims' descriptions or sympathetic remarks did not appear in those records.

Imperialism and Rationalization of the Massacre

Compared to the monotonous and evasive tone of the descriptions about *ryūgen* and Korean disturbance, the official records showed the emotive use of expressions in support of the imperial family. As we observed in the children's essays, the photographs of the empress and the prince regent Hirohito abruptly interrupted their writings. The forceful intervention by the imperial presence after censorship paralleled to the direction of the govern-

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[56] Department of Social Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Record of Taishō Earthquake* 1: 1198.

[57] Ibid., 1: 1198-1201.

ment-issued records to promote the imperial family, particularly strengthening the image of Hirohito as a benevolent imperial leader. A detailed account in *The Records of Taishō Earthquake* was regarding the collections and distributions of monetary and material donations in and outside Japan. The 2nd volume was essentially devoted for such accounts, and one chapter was dedicated to the relief activities by the imperial family—the amount of imperial gifts, distributions of cooked rice for refugees by the Ministry of Imperial Household, the empress' visits to the hospitals, Hirohito's visits to the disaster areas, his "gracious" decision to postpone his wedding ceremony, and so forth. Those accounts had excessive propensity to extol the relief efforts by the administrative organizations and displayed citizens' deep appreciations for the generosity of the imperial family.[58]

The praise of the imperial family was prominent in *The Record of Taishō Earthquake* and many disaster records published by the prefectural governments. In *The Record of the Earthquake in Yokohama* (横濱市震災誌 *Yokohama-shi shinsai shi*, 1926), the editor exaggerated people's appreciation of the imperial family's benevolence, explaining that citizens of Yokohama were "moved to tears" by the imperial gifts and the visits by the members of the imperial family.[59] Besides, *The Photograph Collection of Taishō Earthquake* (大正震災寫眞集 *Taishō shinsai shashin shū*), which was published by the Martial Law Headquarter in September 1924, promoted the image of Hirohito in the presence of military. It began with portraits of army generals and officers followed by photographs of Hirohito's visits to the damaged sites. Seated on a horseback in a military uniform, the composition of pictures, including Hirohito with his military officers, evokes a suggestion common to many of his photographs during the wartime.[60] The intertwining image of the imperial family and militarism was the clear representation of fruit of the martial law to guide public con-

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[58] Ibid., 1: 119-57.

[59] Yokohama Municipal Office, ed., *The Record of the Earthquake in Yokohama*, vol. 1 (Yokohama: Yokohama Municipal Office, 1926): 30-32.

[60] Kantō Martial Law Headquarter, ed., *The Photograph Collection of Taishō Earthquake: September, 1923* (Tokyo: Kaikokusha, 1924), 1-4.

sciousness toward following the trajectory of military control after the earthquake.

In the public records, Prince regent Hirohito, the imperial family, and militarism symbolized the rationalization of Japanese injustice against Koreans. As the police and military realized that there was no single piece of evidence to confirm malicious crimes by Koreans, the government prohibited the press from reporting any issues on Koreans, while the cabinet office issued a declaration to ban further attacks on Koreans and ordered the police to seize weapons from *jikeidan*.[61] The authority's efforts to avoid its responsibility for spreading *ryūgen*, encouraging *jikeidan* to attack Koreans, and even participating in murders greatly confused *jikeidan*, who claimed that they had sacrificed themselves to protect their community from danger.[62] In fact, when police arrested *jikeidan* and brought them to trial, the common argument of the defendants (*jikeidan*) was the logic of self-sacrifice: the intention was purely out of patriotic spirit for the nation. Considering the motivations of defendants as patriotism, the defendants' villagers formed the Kantō *Jikeidan* Union (関東自警団同盟 *Kantō jikeidan dōmei*) and requested a reduction of penalty for them on the grounds that the police encouraged them to attack Koreans. While severely criticizing the police for not taking responsibility for urging them to protect themselves from Koreans, the focus of the union's statement was "noble spirit of self-sacrifice" that *jikeidan* demonstrated at the time of national crisis.[63] Consequently, Hirohito pardoned all defendants on January 26, 1924, on the occasion of his wedding.[64] These judicial trials implicated that the nation had no intention to bring justice for the Korean victims. Instead, the negotiation between civilians and the authorities over the point of responsibility for the massacre was settled by the imperial cause—they attacked

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[61] Dŏk-sang Kang and Byŏng-dong Kŭm, eds., *Sources for Modern History 6: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1963), 79.

[62] Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 86-88, 148.

[63] Ibid., 146, 154-58.

[64] Matsuo, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and Martial Law; Jōmō Shinbun*, November 6, 1923.

Koreans for the sake of nation and community, therefore, the massacre was justified. Thus, the promotion of imperialism aimed to suppress any objections against the falsifications in the children's words and to satisfy the assaulters' claim of justifying their actions. Recording the earthquake was utilized to conceal the facts deemed inconvenient to the authority and to confirm and remind the people of the state's successful handling of disaster relief and maintenance of social order. Consequently, those official records dismissed the reality of the chaotic atmosphere caused by *ryūgen* and the violence and killings of Koreans.

Remembrances in the Oral History

By the 1960s, the oral history projects of the earthquake, including eyewitness accounts of the massacre, emerged from individual researchers as well as the people of the local communities in the affected areas. In the 1980s, when the authors of children's essays in the 1920s reached their mid-sixties to seventies, the grassroot movements achieved great success by collecting the narratives of personal experience from both Japanese and Koreans who lived, experienced, and witnessed the assaults and massacre. Despite the hardship in conducting interviews of the events more than a half-century ago, over a thousand interviews were recorded in multiple publications. The frequent expressions within these individual memories were their fear of "Korean disturbance" and experience in witnessing the violence and killings. Most accounts described how people were greatly confused and terrified by the *ryūgen* about Koreans. Their articulations of the massacre were generally short but vivid and implied how the witnesses have positioned themselves in their memories of the events. A witness who was a schoolchild at the time of the earthquake remembered how he thought that Koreans deserved to be killed for their malicious acts against Japanese. He depicted scenes of twenty to thirty bodies left on a street, covered by dogs, and how much he hated to cross the street to go to school. Later, the community built a cemetery for the bodies to be buried, but the cemetery became a place for a test of courage game among children. Although several decades have passed, this interviewee remembered the appalling sight of

ruthlessly left corpses and the children's games created based on the deaths of Koreans. It is noteworthy that he indicated no emotional expressions toward the victims, at least in his words. Instead, he remembered the incident as an experience that harmed his childhood memory. While explaining the incident as a mere observer, he described it as if he were the victim of witnessing a disturbing scene.[65] Similar to this recollection, most testimonies that provided the details of cruelty described the scenes objectively. Sympathetic expressions appeared in some testimonies; however, a feeling of guilt and a sense of responsibility for the deaths were rarely found. Even in the testimonies indicating sympathy, they neither stressed their community's guilt of committing injustice nor recognized the incidents as crimes. Focus of their regret was directed to a shameful Japanese character that was easily agitated and misled by *ryūgen*.[66]

In 2014, Dŏk-sang Kang, a modern Korean historian, states in his reflections regarding the fifty-years of the research on the massacre, "In Over 6,000 homicides, there is no single testimony saying 'I did it.'"[67] The testimonies confirm his observation and sense of strangeness because only a few described themselves as active participants of massacre. Taizō Ishikawa's interview was a rare example: he discussed the circumstances that led him to volunteer to become a leader of *jikeidan*, which murdered Koreans. He explained that an extremely intense atmosphere prompted him to believe the *ryūgen* as truth and confessed that he was convinced that Koreans and socialists were traitors to Japan.[68] Moreover, a handful of testimonies

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[65] Executive Committee of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake, *The Hidden History: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean Massacre in Saitama*, 67-69.

[66] Tokyo Shinagawa district, *The Collection of Experience Records at the Great Kantō Earthquake*; Executive Committee of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake, *The Hidden History: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean Massacre in Saitama*; Masao Nishizaki, ed., *The Records of Massacre of Koreans in the Great Kantō Earthquake*: *Testimony of 1100 in Tokyo* (Tokyo: Gendaishokan, 2016).

[67] Dŏk-sang Kang, "Beyond History of a Nation," *Journal of Ohara Institute for Social Research* 668 (June 2014): 9.

[68] Nishizaki, *The Records of Massacre of Koreans in the Great Kantō Earthquake: Testimony of 1100 in Tokyo*, 435.

expressed the guilt of Japanese by confessing their feeling of sorrow. Ichirō Matsuo stated;

> . . . It was heart-rending. . . Some Koreans were killed in brutal ways in front of my eyes. Their blood shed red on their white shirts, their hands were tied, nonetheless, the cruelty continued and their bodies were laid everywhere on roads. If we had had radio then, this cruelty would have not happened. As a Japanese, I deeply and sincerely apologize to those Koreans.[69]

The individuals, who had closely interacted with the victims before the earthquake, also expressed their penitence for taking the lives of Koreans.[70] One witness acknowledged the interview process as a way to make atonement for his guilt of remaining silent for decades, and that he "sincerely pray for the repose" of the victims' souls.[71] However, the expressions implying their atonement for the unreasonable killings, like the previous example, were the least in numbers. Even though there were testimonies that Japanese displayed their sympathy and remorse, the chief emphasis was usually placed more on their shameful conduct, less on their guilt and responsibility. Overall, this tendency demonstrated a sense of aloofness with the incidents and detachment from the perspectives of thousands of innocent people who were murdered without reason. The objective descriptions of the incidents effectively denied their direct involvements in any stages of massacre.

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[69] Ibid., 26.

[70] Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 167-71.

[71] Executive Committee of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake, *The Hidden History: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean Massacre in Saitama*, 63.

A Difficult Path to Acknowledgement

Since the massacre occurred, the deliberate avoidance of an acknowledgement of massacre continues to be a common phenomenon among the Japanese government and people. In December 1923, a congressman, Ryūtaro Nagai inquired Prime Minister Gonbei Yamamoto at the plenary session of the House of Representatives regarding the responsibilities of the government on the incidents and requested him to take the necessary actions to console bereaved families. Yamamoto only replied that the case is "under investigation" and avoided the discussion by making an evasive statement that it is "not the right time to discuss" the matter.[72] The nonchalant attitude of the government remained the same even after eight decades. Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi dismissed the recommendation with a report of the massacre submitted by Japan Federation of Bar Association in August 2003 that urged the government to take its responsibilities of violence and murders against Koreans and Chinese by thoroughly investigating the incidents and making an official apology.[73]

Meanwhile, the Central Disaster Management Council (CDMC) under the Cabinet Office Disaster Management Bureau initiated a ten-year comprehensive research project on Japan's natural disasters in 2003. It published the three volumes of report on the Great Kantō earthquake from 2006 to 2008, which included a chapter dedicated to "the expansion of damage caused by confusion," referring to *ryūgen* and the massacre of Koreans.[74] Although the report did not aim to "investigate historical facts," it utilized available research findings and confirmed that the military, police,

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[72] Byŏng-dong Kŭm, ed., "Kanpō gōgai, December 16, 1923," in *Chōsenjin gyakusatsu kanren kanchō shiryō* [The government agency documents on Korean massacre] (Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 1991), 65-68.

[73] Japan Federation of Bar Associations, "Recommendation to Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi," August 25, 2003, http://www.azusawa.jp/shiryou/kantou-200309.html; Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 252.

[74] The Central Disaster Management Council, ed., *Report on the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Director General for Disaster Management, Cabinet Office, 2008): 179-221.

and people committed "homicides" against Koreans.[75] The report acknowledged the incidents as an important lesson for future disaster management and suggested "making the necessary efforts to reflect back on the past and eliminate ethnic discriminations."[76] Nevertheless, the government's persistent refusal has continued to date. Although designated as a committee chair of the CDMC, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe contradicted the report, claiming, "There is no record in the government that can grasp the government's involvement in the massacre."[77] Insisting, "The government is not held accountable to respond to the report written by intellectuals," the Abe administration repeatedly denied the government's responsibility and revealed no intention to make a formal apology to the victims.[78]

An acknowledgement of the massacre emerged from civilians as a form of memorial service for the victims or protest against the government's inactions to bring justice to the victims. As early as 1923, groups of Korean residents, Japanese socialists and labor activists began organizing memorial services and protest meetings, despite facing severe suppressions by police. Some villages, where *jikeidan* murdered Koreans, also held memorial services and built tombstones or monuments in memory of the victims.[79] While there are just a handful of cases, regional activities to mourn the victims have quietly continued after the postwar years. Importantly, however, until 2009 when a citizen's group called Group Hōsenka built a monument in Tokyo near Arakawa River, the inscriptions on those monu-

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[75] Ibid., 2: 206.

[76] Ibid., 2: 224.

[77] Shinzō Abe, House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan, "Memorandum on Questions Regarding Korean Massacre at the Time of Great Kantō Earthquake" (189th sess., HC, Memo. 34, February 27, 2015); Shinzō Abe, House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan, "Memorandum on Questions Regarding Korean and Chinese Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake" (190th sess., HC, Memo. 131, June 7, 2016).

[78] Shinzō Abe, House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan, "Memorandum on Questions Regarding Korean and Chinese Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake" (193rd sess., HC, Memo. 91, May 12, 2017).

[79] Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 194-216.

ments built by Japanese did not clarify the assailants or even the nature of the deaths of Koreans.[80] Moreover, while Japanese locals contributed to carrying out memorial projects, in many cases Korean residents initiated the activities and appealed to local communities in order to build monuments to mourn the victims. The field research on the memorial monuments by historian Shōji Yamada revealed that even though the communities embraced the feeling of grief to the victims, they could not face the reality of being assailants.[81] Such subconscious response within the locals concerned in the massacre impeded the process of accepting the guilt, thus resulted in failing to acknowledge the truth of massacre. For instance, a tombstone built for a victim, who was killed by the villagers of Someya ward in Saitama, was inscribed with a phrase, "[a Korean named Daeheung Kang] died in this town during the Great Kantō Earthquake." Takasuke Takahashi, a grandson of a headman of Someya village who organized and directed Someya's *jikeidan*, criticizes the inscription's use of a word "died" as it does not tell what the villagers had done to a victim accurately. "A word 'died' could mean a death from illness or something else," Takahashi explains, by using an indirect expression, "[The villagers of Someya] wished to conceal the fact of homicide." He concludes that at the fundamental level, "[The villagers] did not feel they had done wrong," since they saw themselves "victims" of *ryūgen* and the authority's order to attack Koreans.[82]

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[80] Ibid., 255. Group Hōsenka and another citizen's group organized by Japanese have engaged in a grassroot study on one of the massacres that took place in Tokyo. After decades of hard work, they accomplished building a monument clearly stated the victims and assailants of massacre. See, Committee of Excavation and Mourning of Remains of Korean Massacred during the Great Kantō Earthquake, *Wind, Carry a Song of Balsam Flowers: 70 Years since the Great Kantō Earthquake and Korean Massacre* (Tokyo: Kyōikushiryō Shuppankai, 1992), https://housenka.jimdofree.com.

[81] Yamada, *Korean Massacre at the Great Kantō Earthquake and Its Aftermath: National and Public Responsibility for the Massacre*, 260-65.

[82] Oral interview of Takasuke Takahashi in Satoru Okuaki, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and Koreans: Why Did a Tragedy Happen* (NHK Educational TV, 2016).

Conclusion

In the accounts of Japanese who experienced the Great Kantō Earthquake, they have clearly remembered the chaotic confusion, the fear of "Korean disturbance," and *jikeidan*'s obsession to attack Koreans. Children's essays illustrated that it was indisputably the most unforgettable memory. Nonetheless, as this study has shown, the state attempted to conceal the cruelty of the massacre in its official records and children's essays. Applying modifications and omissions, the published version altered children's essays and distorted their memories in the original record. The emphasis on the relief activities by the imperial family effectively led the narrative in the official reports to praise the government and military, along with the imperial family. Replacing descriptions of brutality against Koreans in children's essays with the imperial photographs signified the promotion of imperialism and suggested the idea that the nation forgave the massacre in the name of patriotism and loyalty. Conversely, the personal memories emphasized traumatic experiences, which included tension and fear of warlike situations created by the martial law and frenzied *jikeidan*. Unlike the official records, the testimonies expressed disappointments on the negative consequences of the Japanese group consciousness. However, like the narrative in official records, a sense of guilt, remorse, and their responsibility for the justice of victims were virtually missing. The lack of efforts to consider the massacre as a problem created by them indicated that these individual memories tend to regard the massacre as a mere unfortunate accident in the past. While the tombstones and memorial monuments represent the deep compunction of the communities that were involved in the violence, the omissions of assailants, victims, or the nature of incidents in the inscriptions indicate that passive desire of Japanese to avoid responsibilities of lives taken by them.

It must be stressed that the dedications by the people from both sides of victims and assailants have generated certain results to record history of the massacre and attempted to redress painful injustices buried in history. Nonetheless, the way Japanese government and society in general have responded to this past is a retrograde attitude to the advancement of research

and acknowledgement and mourning process. The recent movement to rewrite the history of Japanese imperialism in the education field has extended to the reinterpretation of the events, resulting in an omission of the term "massacre" in a supplementary reading material for metropolitan high schools.[83] The publications by the nonfiction writers advocating a disavowal of the massacre have created logic for public to justify the attack on Koreans in the name of self-defense. Despite the basis of these authors' narratives lacking serious examinations of historical evidences, the public opinion inclines to victimize *jikeidan* against Korean "terrorists."[84] Simultaneously, it is also true that many Japanese have neither knowledge nor opportunity for learning what had happened on the day of the earthquake, except from few sentences in school textbooks. Vague understanding among Japanese public has correlated with the government's silence on the formal requests by the civil organizations. Japanese public and government's deliberate avoidance to face the past and reckon the guilt has neglected the massacre and denied justice to the victims, even in the absence of direct censorship.

As an earthquake-prone nation, reminding people of the tragic past is crucial to prevent further human-instigated disaster during natural catastrophe. The diffusion of misinformation during natural disasters has increased in social media, and we have witnessed the unceasing negative expressions about ethnic groups in Japan, particularly Koreans and Chinese, in the recent decades. When rumors and misinformation spread in social media soon after the 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake, false reports about stealing and

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[83] Toshio Suzuki, "Historical Revisionism on the Great Kantō Earthquake in the Educational Field," *Journal of Ohara Institute for Social Research* 668 (June 2014): 27.

[84] Miyoko Kudō, *The Great Kantō Earthquake: The Truth about "Korean Massacre"* (Tokyo: Sankeishinbun Shuppan, 2009); Yasuo Katō, *The Great Kantō Earthquake: There was No Korean Massacre!* (Tokyo: Wakku, 2014). Nonfiction writer Miyoko Kudō and her husband, also a nonfiction writer, Yasuo Katō, published books that follow the government's fabrication of the number of crimes by Koreans. They argue that Koreans had indeed plotted rebellions in the midst of the disaster; therefore, "massacre" was rather a counterattack by *jikeidan* by the means of self-defense.

vandalism by Koreans and Chinese resurfaced.[85] The vicious discriminatory comments including "Koreans are throwing poisons in wells" re-emerged during the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake.[86] Besides the recent rise of xenophobia, these examples have shown Japanese society's continuing propensity for claiming victimhood, when there are true victims of the misled information. Remembering the 1923 massacre and reminding Japanese society of the consequences of discriminatory actions are essential to cultivate the public's ability to take responsibility for the past and to make proper judgements and decisions during emergencies.

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[85] Seung-koo Choi, "There Are People Who Post Discriminatory and Xenophobic Comments on Twitter," Nikkan Berita, March 21, 2011, http://www.nikkanberita.com/print.cgi?id=201103210018081; Yukio Edano, "Chief Cabinet Secretary Press Conference" (Tokyo: Cabinet Public Relations Office, March 12, 2011), https://warp.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11236451/www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyoukanpress/201103/12_p.html.

[86] "Be Aware of False Tweets," *The Sankei Shinbun*, April 15, 2016, https://www.sankei.com/affairs/news/160415/afr1604150040-n2.html; Kaoru Tashiro House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan, "Memorandum on Questions Regarding Korean and Chinese Massacre during the Great Kantō Earthquake" (190th sess., HC, Memo. 131, May 27, 2016).

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