

What happened in the area of Greater Tōkyō right after the Great Kantō Earthquake?

—The State, the Media and the People

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Introduction

This contribution focuses on the following three points out of the many problems related to the massacre of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake.

(1) The double responsibility of the state

The Japanese state spread false information that Koreans were rioting when the Great Kantō Earthquake took place on September 1st, 1923, and by doing so caused the massacres of Koreans. This is the first responsibility of the state. Not only has the Japanese state never accepted this responsibility, but it has also used every available means to cover up its responsibility. That is the second responsibility of the state. In other words, the Japanese state committed a double iniquity by committing a crime and then covering it up.

On December 15th, 1923, Nagai Ryūtarō tried to extract an apology from the government during the Lower House plenary session by presenting evidence, such as a telegram by the head of the Police Bureau (*keihokyoku*) of the Interior Ministry and directives from the head of the department for Interior Affairs in Saitama Prefecture, which proved that the authorities had circulated rumours about Koreans having started riots. Prime Minister Yamamoto Gonbei gave an evasive answer to Nagai's question, however, by stating that 'the government is currently conducting an investigation into what happened'. In reality, the government was pursuing its policy to cover up the state's responsibility for the massacres of Koreans. The Japanese government has upheld this policy of the Yamamoto cabinet ever since. On August 25th, 2003, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, which had received a plea for the protection of their human rights by Korean residents in Japan, submitted a recommendation to Prime Minister Koizumi urging an apology for the incident, but there was no answer from him. He was probably continuing the policy of the Yamamoto cabinet.

(2) Responsibility of the Japanese people

There are eight gravestones of massacred Koreans built by the Japanese in the pre-war era, but each gravestone is inscribed with only the posthumous Buddhist names, such as 'senjin no hi (= Koreans' monument)' (Honjō in Saitama Prefecture), 'hōkai muen tō (=Monument for those with no surviving relatives)' (erected by the Funabashi Buddhist Federation in Chiba Prefecture) or 'Sen kakugo dō shinji' (Jōganji temple, Kodama town, Kodama County, Saitama Prefecture), and none of them has an inscription specifying that the Japanese killed them. There

are six gravestones of massacred Koreans erected by Japanese after the war, which were built jointly by Japanese and Koreans after the Koreans made a petition, and for three of these gravestones Japanese wrote the inscriptions. After the war, expressions of remorse vowing that such a tragedy should not be repeated were written on the gravestones, but there is still no inscription indicating that the Japanese killed the Koreans (historical sources 1 and 2. As for details, please refer to pages 219 to 249 in my book *Kantō daishinsaiji no chōsenjin gyakusatsu—sono kokka sekinin to minshū sekinin (Massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake)*, Sōshisha Publishing Company, 2003)

Historical source 1 An inscription on the ‘cenotaph for Korean victims during the Great Kantō Earthquake’ erected in 1952 within the precincts of the Ansei-ji temple, Jinbohara, Kamisato town, Kodama County, Saitama Prefecture:

During the Great Kantō Earthquake in the twelfth year of the Taishō era, dozens of people, who had been sent here from Tōkyō, met a horrible end at this place, because of rumours alleging that Koreans had instigated riots. (...) We are erecting this monument feeling deep contrition. We will not repeat the same mistakes, and hope that in future we will be Asian compatriots; we want to join hands together with deep remorse and self-caution and strive to build an eternally peaceful East. (...) (Inscription by Yanagida Kenjūrō)

Historical source 2 An inscription on the ‘Cenotaph for Korean victims during the Great Kantō Earthquake’ erected in 1959 within the grounds of the Nagamine cemetery, Higashidai 5-chōme, Honjō City, Saitama Prefecture:

During the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923, 86 Koreans, who had been sent here from Tōkyō, because of rumours alleging that they had attempted to cause riots, died tragically at this place. (...) we build this gravestone with high hopes for a bright future and grave remorse for our dark past, and we give our vow to the victims who rest under this soil to commit ourselves to friendship between Japan and Korea, and world peace. (Inscription by Yasui Iku).

Only the inscription of the gravestone given in historical source 3 specifies that Japanese were the perpetrators of the massacres. Subsequent memorials built by North Koreans and Koreans do not make clear references to the perpetrators of the massacres, probably out of consideration for the Japanese.

Historical source 3 Erected by the prefectural branch of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan within the grounds of the Magome cemetery, Funabashi City, Chiba Prefecture: ‘Cenotaph for our compatriots who perished during the Great Kantō Earthquake, completed in 1947, on the anniversary of the March First Revolution’.

... the then Yamamoto military cabinet imposed martial law, instigated and incited army veterans and ignorant people with groundless statements that socialists and Koreans were conspiring to cause riots to massacre socialists and our compatriots (the original text is in Korean).

Both Yanagida Kenjūrō and Yasui Iku supposedly did not mention the perpetrators of the massacres out of consideration for the local people who had slain the Koreans. However, if the Japanese people obscure their own responsibility for massacring the Koreans, it is just not possible that the Japanese state would apologize and accept responsibility for the massacres.

This is why the Japanese people also bear responsibility for the massacres of Koreans,

which atrocity remains unexpiated, even today. The Japanese people have the responsibility to make clear the responsibility of the state as well as to clarify what caused the Japanese to participate in the massacre of Koreans, and to reflect on their deeds.

(3) Responsibility of the newspapers

The *Hōchi Shimbun* was the newspaper that continuously reported that the authorities had spread false rumours. And yet, it turned its attention also toward the Korean victims at the bottom of society. The *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun* likewise exposed the authorities, but only the *Hōchi Shimbun* expressed concern for the victims (Note 1).

The *Hōchi Shimbun*, in its evening edition of August 29, 1924, just before the first anniversary of the incident, lamented as follows: ‘Although there is no shortage of evidence that the authorities were the source of the false rumours, no government official has taken responsibility. Eventually, the truth has been buried in perpetual darkness.’

However, the newspapers in general had always offered only partisan coverage of the Korean liberation and independence movement, and they followed the government’s policy at the time of the incident. I would also like to bring light to bear on this responsibility of the newspapers.

Note 1: With regard to this point, please refer to the commentary ‘Kantō daishinsaiji chōsenjin gyakusatsu jikenn ni kan suru shimbun hōdō to ronsetsu no shokeikō (Tendencies in newspaper coverage and editorials concerning the massacre of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake’ in the supplementary volume to Yamada Shōji (ed.), *Kantō daishinsai chōsenjin gyakusatsu mondai kankei shiryō V: Chōsenjin gyakusatsu kanren hōdō shiryō* (Materials related to the issue of massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake V: historical sources of newspaper coverage on the massacres of Koreans), 2004, Rokuin shobō.

1. Historical premises for the massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake—the increase in the number of Korean residents in Japan; the development of the liberation and independence movement of Koreans; and the Japanese state, the newspapers and the people.

(1) The increase in the number of Korean residents in Japan and their living conditions

Korean workers had a long history of working in Japan. They were already working in the Chikuhō coalfield in Fukuoka Prefecture and coal mines in Saga Prefecture during the 1890s.

It was from about 1917 during the First World War that the number of Korean residents in Japan increased sharply (Table 1). In the Kantō area, Koreans were concentrated in the Keihin industrial region (Table 2). The number of Koreans living in the Kantō region in 1923 was 14,144, and the number of Koreans living in Tōkyō Prefecture and Kanagawa was 12,212. As exports from European countries ceased during the war years, the demand for Japanese industrial products from abroad increased and the rapid development of Japanese capitalism caused a shortage of labour. Japanese companies turned to the cheap labour provided by Korean workers.

Table 1 Population of Koreans resident in Japan (estimate) and number of passages and returns home

Year	Population of Korean residents in Japan	Increase from last year	Passages	Returns home
1910	2,600			
1911	5,728	3,128		
1912	7,796	2,068		
1913	10,394	2,598		
1914	12,961	2,567		
1915	15,106	2,145		
1916	17,972	2,866		
1917	22,218	4,246	14,012	3,927
1918	34,082	11,864	17,910	9,305
1919	37,732	3,650	20,968	12,739
1920	40,775	3,043	27,497	20,947
1921	62,404	21,629	38,118	25,536
1922	90,741	28,337	70,462	46,326
1923	136,557	45,816	97,395	89,745
1924	172,130	35,573	122,215	75,430
1925	214,657	42,527	131,273	112,471
1926	247,358	32,701	91,092	83,709
1927	308,685	61,327	138,016	93,991
1928	358,121	49,436	166,286	117,522
1929	398,920	40,799	153,570	98,275
1930	419,009	20,089	127,776	141,860

Reference: (1) The number of Korean residents in Japan is taken from Tamura Toshiyuki, ‘Shokuminchiki ‘naichi’ zaijū chōsenjin jinkō (Korean population living in the ‘home territory’ during the colonial era)’, in Tōkyō Toritsu Daigaku Keizaigakubu, Dōdaigaku keizaigakkai, *Keizai to keizaigaku*, No. 52, February 1983, pp. 31—36. The figures for 1920 and 1930 are taken from the national census. The other years’ are estimates. (2) The number of passages and returns home are taken from Morita Yoshio, *Sūji ga kataru zainichi kankoku chōsenjin* (What numbers tell us about Korean residents in Japan), Akashi Shoten, 1996, p. 35.

Table 2 Korean population in the Kantō region, in each prefecture

Year	Ibaraki	Tochigi	Gunma	Saitama	Chiba	Tōkyō	Kanagawa	Total
1920	74	97	283	78	40	2,485	782	3,839
1921	118	149	406	138	122	4,394	1,270	6,697
1922	225	149	343	240	238	7,198	1,969	10,362
1923	371	197	736	311	317	8,567	3,645	14,144
1924	656	297	970	787	707	13,385	5,678	22,480

Reference: (1) Tamura Toshiyuki, op. cit., pp.31—36. The figures for 1920 and 1930 are taken from the national census. The other years’ are estimates.

On the other hand, on the Korean Peninsula, farmers went bankrupt, could not make their living by relying on farming alone, and were forced to work away from home. The initial trigger for this was the land survey conducted from 1910 to 1918. As a result, independent and semi-independent farmers started to disappear, so that at one end of the spectrum the number of landowners increased and at the other end the number of tenant farmers likewise (Chart 3). There were various causes. During this period, Yeoktun land that had virtually been owned by farmers and land owned by the imperial household were made government property, and independent farmers had to become tenant farmers. Because some landowners made common land their private property, farmers could not use the land. In addition, some farmers forfeited land they had not declared. At the time, many farmers were illiterate and had difficulty preparing the necessary documents and completing the onerous procedures within the stipulated legal timeframe.

Table 3 Korean landowners, independent farmers, semi-independent farmers, tenant farmers, number of households and ratio

	1914	1919	Increase/ Decrease
Landowners	46,754 (1.8%)	90,386 (3.4%)	+ 43,632
Independent farmers	569,517 (22.0%)	525,830 (19.7%)	- 43,687
Semi-independent farmers	1,065,705 (41.1%)	1,045,606 (39.3%)	- 20,099
Tenant farmers	911,261 (35.1%)	1,003,003 (37.6%)	+ 91,742
Total	2,592,237 (100.0%)	2,664,825 (100.0%)	+ 72,588

Reference: Hosokawa Karoku, *Hosokawa Karoku chosakushū: dainikan shokuminshi* (Edition of works by Hosokawa Karoku, Vol. 2, Colonial History), Rironsha, 1972.

The factor of a population gain on the Japanese side coincided with a population loss on the colonized Korean side; consequently, the number of Korean residents in Japan increased sharply. The Koreans worked in dangerous workplaces such as coal mines and in construction, for wages that were 50—80 % of those of their Japanese counterparts.

When economic depression set in after the end of World War I, companies tended to prefer using low-wage Korean workers over Japanese workers to mitigate their economic difficulties. As a result, the attitude of lower-class Japanese workers, who were worried about unemployment, changed from contempt to hostility toward Korean workers, who they felt were rivals in the job market (see book of the author op. cit., pp. 55-57).

Historical Source 4 Conditions of employment of Korean residents in Japan

1. Wages are lower than those of Japanese.
2. Working hours are longer than those of others.
3. Dangerous work, dirty work, toilsome work

(Tōkyō-fu gakumubu shakaika, 'Zaikyō Chōsenjin Rōdōsha no Genjō (Actual conditions of Korean workers living in Tokyo', 1929, Paku Kyonshiku, *Zainichi Chōsenjin Kankei Shiryō Shūsei* (Historical sources concerning Korean residents in Japan), Second volume, San-ichi Shobō, 1975, p. 971.

(2) Development of the Korean independence and liberation movement, and increasing suspicions among Japanese security authorities with regard to Koreans living in Japan, especially those living in Tokyo.

The March 1st independence movement which began on March 1st, 1919, was on a large scale. From March 1st to April 29th, more than 1.1 million people in total participated in 1,214 demonstrations in 212 prefectures and counties. (Kim Jin-Bong, *The March 1st movement and the people in Go Il-Jae, Collected papers commemorating the 50th anniversary of the March 1st movement*, Dong-a Ilbo, 1969, p.365)

After this movement, the insurgency by the *giretsudan* (courageous groups) and the armed struggle of the independence army based in northeastern China (Manchuria) intensified and struck fear in the hearts of Japan's rulers. The brutal suppression of the March 1st demonstrations served to further inflame this independence movement.

Korean residents in Japan were also mobilized and became more militant. The third 'Chōsenjin Gaikyō (Koreans, an Overview)', published by the Interior Ministry Police Bureau Security Division in June 1920, also acknowledged this fact and stated, 'malcontent Koreans' anti-Japanese feelings show traces of hardening and have been attracting attention since the independence riots in the year of 8 in the Taishō era'. According to this report, the Koreans whom it was necessary to keep under observation, i.e. Koreans who had been put on a blacklist, numbered 212, of which 155 were in Tōkyō; these latter accounted for 73% of all the Koreans on the blacklist. Most blacklisted Koreans were in Tokyo because of the concentration of foreign students there. According to the same report, as at the end of June 1920, the number of Korean students in Japan was 828 and the number of these in Tōkyō was 682, which accounted for 82% of the total number nationwide (Paku Kyonshiku, *op. cit.*, First Volume, p. 83, pp. 117—118)

According to the reminiscences of Kim Sung (real name Jang Ji-Ag) who studied in Tōkyō shortly after the March 1st movement, 'one third of Korean students in Tōkyō at the time were poor students 'studying while working'; they were more intellectually advanced than another group of rich Korean students, and 'everyone was studying Marxism'. (*Ariran no Uta—Aru Chōsen kakumeika no Shōgai* (Song of Arirang—The Life of a Korean revolutionist), written by Nym Wales and translated by Matsudaira Ioko, Iwanami Bunko, 1987, pp. 89—90)

The Japanese security authorities had long been wary as 'Tōkyō is the area, among all the prefectures, with the greatest number of Koreans who require observation'. (Interior Ministry, Police Bureau Security Division) After the March 1st movement, the security authorities increased their vigilance with regard to the Koreans living in Tōkyō. On July 28, 1921, a section of Korean affairs (*naisen koto kakari*) was created within the Tōkyō Metropolitan Police (Keishichō shi hensan iinkai, *Keishichō shi* (The History of the Tōkyō Metropolitan Police) Taishō Period, 1960, p.107).

Korean socialists and anarchists living in Tōkyō organized the Kokutōkai (Black Current Society) in November 1921. This society broke up and in November 1922, socialists formed the Hokuseikai (North Star Society) and anarchists the Kokuyūkai (Black Friendship Society). In the same month, the Alliance of Tōkyō Korean Workers (*Tōkyō chosen rōdō*

dōmeikai) was formed.

The head of the Police Bureau of the Interior Ministry was alarmed about these developments and in a note dated May 14th, 1923, he alerted senior regional officials that there was a ‘very conspicuous trend among Korean workers resident in Japan to frequently participate in socialist and labour movements and be involved in group actions’. (Paku Kyonshiku, *op. cit.*, First volume, p. 38.)

In the spring of 1923, Japanese authorities’ vigilance toward, and repression of, Koreans was at its peak. On March 1st of that year, the Tōkyō Metropolitan Police obtained false information that Koreans living in Keihin were in contact with the Korean Communist Party (*kōrai kyōsan tō*) in the French concession in Shanghai and also with Korean groups in Hawaii and were plotting something. As a result, the police went on high alert in areas with high concentrations of Korean residents in Tokyo and surrounding districts. (Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun, March 1st 1923)

On May Day that year (May 1st) the police agency banned socialists and other ideological groups from participating in celebrations (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 1st 1923). The ideological groups that received particular attention were the Korean. Policemen arrested those Koreans who participated despite the ban, after beating and kicking them brutally. The next day, the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun* reported the situation as one ‘that made people think it was downright brutality’.

(3) Newspapers and the dissemination of the image of ‘malcontent Koreans

At that time the phrase ‘malcontent Koreans (*futei senjin*)’ was used frequently. The term ‘malcontent (*futei*)’, according to the dictionary *Kōjien* published by Iwanami Shoten, has the following two meanings: 1. being querulous and incompilant; and 2. rudely behaving as one pleases.

However, at the time, the term ‘malcontent Koreans’ referred to those Koreans who were struggling for an independent, free Korea. Ethnic self-determination is a legitimate right and not wrong. Calling this an expression of ‘malcontent’ could only mean that for the Japanese state, criticism or resistance against Japan’s colonial rule was taboo.

Looking at newspaper headlines of the day concerning the Korean independence movement, as for example the historical source 5, one sees the movement was mostly labelled as either a ‘conspiracy’ or as that of ‘malcontents’. Furthermore, the ‘malcontent Koreans’ were taken up in the media as if they were homicidal monsters (historical source 6)

Historical source 5 Headlines of newspaper articles dealing with the Korean independence movement:

Korean independence plot unveiled, associates of Prince Yi Kang arrested (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 28th, 1919)

Conspiracy made up of Christian Korean women’s group—arrest of young persons’ diplomatic group reveals inside information, 14 persons arrested (*Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, December 19th, 1919)

The full background of the conspiracy for independence by malcontent Koreans—assassinations, arson and robbery at will (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 18th, 1920)

Koreans throw bomb into the Pusan police station—station head slightly injured, thugs covered in blood, lose consciousness (*Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, October 4th, 1920)

Conspiring groups of malcontent Koreans appearing throughout the city—all of them leaders of the provi-

sional Shanghai government, strangle undercover police inspector, big round-up by Tōkyō police (*Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, March 2nd, 1921, evening edition)

Spreading of secret meetings in Hibiya—a sign that malcontent Koreans and extremist leaders enter the capital to team up with socialists—Tōkyō police act (*Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, October 28th, 1921)

Historical source 6 Criticism by Nakanishi Inosuke about newspaper coverage of Koreans:

‘I might not know much about it, but I have seen almost no newspaper coverage introducing the beauty of the Korean homeland and the art and the dignity of the Korean way of life. But there are many articles that use words like bomb, dagger, assault, shooting—all words that make one shiver—and cover the malicious acts of the so-called malcontent Koreans; recently they have been called querulous (*fuhei*) Koreans by some newspapers. The writing style of journalists, who are eager to write anything, is exaggerated.

If somebody who has no understanding and knowledge about ancient or present Korea and Koreans, and especially if sensitive women read those articles every day, they would probably come to think of Korea as a land of mountain thieves and think that Koreans were like fierce tigers. Koreans are becoming victims of inconsiderate journalism, and have become engraved in the minds of ordinary Japanese as dark spectres of fear. (...) I want to ask the question, whether the rumours about Korean riots were not the natural explosion of the Japanese subconsciousness. But has this fear of dark spectres not been groundless? (Nakanishi Inosuke ‘Chōsenjin no tame ni benzu (In defence of the Koreans)’ ‘Fujin Kōron’, Issue 11/12, 1923, taken from Kumu, Byondon (ed.), *Kantō daishinsai chōsenjin gyakusatsu kankei shiryō III Chōsenjin gyakusatsu ni kansuru chishikijin no hannō* (Historical sources concerning the massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake III—The reaction of intellectuals to the massacres of Koreans), Tōkyō, Ryokuin Shobō, 1996, p.267)

In November 1922, Park Yeol and Kaneko Fumiko made an appeal to Japanese workers who accepted the stereotype of ‘malcontent Koreans’, in the first issue of the magazine *Futoi senjin* (Bold Korean) that had just been founded in Tōkyō.

‘Are the “malcontent Koreans” who are horribly misunderstood in Japanese society really people who are plotting wanton murder, destruction and conspiracy? Or are they burning with a desire for freedom? This is what we want to tell you, Japanese workers, you who share a similar fate with us (...).’

As Nakanishi had pointed out, Japanese newspapers had also made Japanese anxious about the Korean movement. However that was not the only problem. By labelling the Korean movement ‘malcontent’ or ‘querulous’, they were depriving the Koreans of the moral legitimacy of national self-determination. As a result, the racial prejudices of Japanese toward Koreans deepened and the former came to harbour unjustifiable fear, animosity and disdain toward the latter.

2. The dissemination of false information about Korean riots by the Japanese state —the first responsibility of the Japanese government

The Great Kantō Earthquake occurred on September 1st, 1923, at 11.58 am. In Tōkyō and Yokohama, the quake caused fires, which resulted in widespread damage. In Tōkyō, the police were spreading information about Koreans rioting as early as the evening of the day the quake happened (refer to historical sources 7, 8, 9). The Tōkyō Metropolitan Police, in the

Taishō Daishin Kasai-shi (Account of the Big Taishō Earthquake and Fire) (Tōkyō Metropolitan Police, 1925), keep complete silence and hide their responsibility.

Historical source 7 Essay by Nishimura Kiyoko, a 1st grade student at Motomura ordinary elementary school in Azabu-ku, Tōkyō titled ‘About the Big Earthquake’:

‘During the big earthquake I was in Iigura. (...) We all fled in the direction of Motomura. (...) When it became dark the policeman came to tell us that OOOOOO (malcontent Koreans) were about to attack’ (taken from Tōkyō-shi Gakumuka (ed.), ‘Tōkyō shiritsu shōgakkō jidō shinsai kinen bunshu (essay collection for the commemoration of the Earthquake by Tōkyō schoolchildren)’ in Kumu, Byondon (ed.), *Kantō daishinsai chōsenjin gyakusatsu kankei shiryō I chōsenjin gyakusatu kanren jidō shiryō* (Historical sources concerning the massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake I—historical sources of children about the massacres of Koreans), Ryokuin Shobō, 1987, p. 299-300).

Historical source 8 Terada Torahiko ‘From my Earthquake diary’ entry from September 2nd.

When I came home thirteen relatives from Asakusa had come to take refuge, because they had been burned out of house and home. They had not been able to take anything with them, and when they had stayed in Ueno Park the night before, apparently a policeman had come and told them that because OO (Korean) arsonists were prowling around, they should be careful. (Kumu, Byondon (ed.), *Chōsenjin gyakusatsu ni kansuru chishikijin no hannō* (The reaction of intellectuals to the massacres of Koreans), Tōkyō, Ryokuin Shobō, 1996, p.285)

Historical source 9 Report at a meeting of vigilante group representatives, ward volunteers and some ward council members of Hongō ward, Tōkyō, on October 25th, 1923:

First, according to representative Murata from the Akebono neighbourhood, the constable from the Akebono-chō Kōban (police station) came to the vigilante group’s office twice to tell that ‘in all neighbourhoods querulous Koreans are murdering and starting fires, so watch out’ (...) (*Hōchi Shimbun*, October 28th, 1923)

However, these actions by policemen were not based on the orders from central security authorities but probably on the judgments of individual station police officers who had become wary of Koreans in the course of their daily duties.

On September 2nd, the head of the Police Bureau at the Interior Ministry erroneously thought that Koreans had instigated riots, and responded by sending notices about Koreans rioting to prefectural governments, giving orders to prefectural police chiefs to be on the alert. The evidence is shown in historical sources 10 and 11.

The reason the telegram of the head of the Police Bureau was delivered one day late, on the third, was that the cavalryman had to take the telegram to the Funabashi Navy Telegraph station.

Historical source 10 Telegram of the head of the Police Bureau of the Interior Ministry to regional police chiefs at 8:15 a.m. on September 3rd, sent from the Funabashi Navy Telegraph station:

Under cover of the earthquake in the vicinity of Tōkyō, Koreans are trying to start fires and execute their lawless schemes in various areas and in Tōkyō they are actually carrying bombs with them; there are people starting fires with petroleum. As the Tōkyō Prefectural Government has already partially imposed marital law, in various areas thorough inspections must take place, and the control of Koreans must be tightened.

(Note: Outside of the text field of the telegram there is a memo saying ‘I recall this message was handed over to the messenger on the afternoon of September 2nd’ (Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (eds.), *Gendaishi shiryō 6: Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin* (Materials of modern history 6: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Koreans), Misuzu shobō, 1963)

Historical source 11 Notice of September 2nd by the head of the Interior Affairs department of Saitama Prefecture, addressed to the municipality heads of the prefecture about the formation of vigilante groups—Matters related to the riots of malcontent Koreans:

Notice

One hears that during the current earthquake there have been rash actions by malcontent Koreans and elements with extremist ideas have joined in these actions. They are trying to achieve their aims, and there is the danger that they, step by step, will cause mischief. To deal with this situation, the local authorities in close cooperation with the local reservist organization (*zaigōgunjinkai*), the fire brigade and the youth organization, are to assume the responsibility of taking precautionary measures, and immediately make arrangements to take the appropriate measures in the instance of an emergency. The above is a notice from the authorities. Please take note.

(Yoshino Sakuzō, *appaku to gyakusatsu* (Repression and massacre), Tōkyō daigaku hōgakubu meiji shimbun zasshi bunko shozō Yoshino bunko)

* Explanation: According to a speech by Nagai Ryūtarō during the main session of the Lower House of the Japanese diet on December 15th, 1923, the regional section chiefs of Saitama Prefecture had finished their consultations with the central ministry (i.e. the Ministry of the Interior), and had returned around 5 o’clock in the evening to report to the Interior Affairs department head. The department head had then given his directions to the municipality heads based on this report. As a result, in the prefecture, vigilante groups were formed.

Parallel to these measures the government imposed martial law in the city of Tōkyō and the five surrounding counties on September 2nd, in Tōkyō prefecture and Kanagawa Prefecture on the third, and in Saitama Prefecture and Chiba Prefecture on the fourth. The lawyer Yamazaki Kesaya aptly remarked that ‘the imposition of martial law at the time truly served to pour oil on the flames. The only success of the army surely was that it made the people’s minds who were already trembling with fear insecure for a long time, and placed citizens wholly into a state of mind of duty against the enemy’. (‘Jishin, Ryūgen, Kaji, Bōto (Earthquake, Rumours, Fire and the Mob)’ in *Jishin, Kenpei, Kaji, Junsu* (Earthquake, Kempei, Fire, Patrol), Iwanami Bunko, 1982, p. 223). The Imposition of martial law, the mobilization of the army, and its massacre of the Koreans beyond any doubt made the Koreans ‘traitors’ in the eyes of the population.

3. Circumstances of the massacres of Koreans

(1) The population and the massacres of Koreans committed by the army

It is not possible to know everything about the circumstances surrounding the massacres of Koreans committed by the army because of the censored news coverage. However, as can be seen from table 4, near the bridges—Yotsugibashi that spanned the Arakawa river and Komatsugawabashi— soldiers (probably the Narashino cavalry regiment) were using machine

guns to massacre Koreans in large numbers. The lawyer Yamazaki Kesaya tells about the extreme circumstances, which were not covered in the newspapers at the time, as follows: ‘Stand up, sit down, the sound of rapid gunfire. It was not only a small number of one or two thousand people who had seen machine guns in Nankatsu; no, there was probably nobody living in the area who had not.’ (Yamazaki Kesaya, *op. cit.*, p. 232)

Table 4 List of all massacres of Koreans committed by the army in September 1923

Day	Place the Koreans were massacred	Circumstances of the massacre
	Within Tōkyō Prefecture	
1 st	Near Kyōbashi Ward, Tsukishima 4-chōme, Tōkyō City	A soldier on overnight leave beats a Korean to death (1).
2 nd or 3 rd (estimated)	Riverbed of the Arakawa near Yotsugibashi, Minami-Katsushika county	Massacre of Koreans by the army using machine guns and rifles continues for a couple of days. The soldiers also bring Korean bodies loaded on trucks. The bodies are sprinkled with oil, burned and buried in the riverbed (2).
3 rd	Near the Western end of Ryōgokubashi, Tōkyō City,	A soldier from the Konoe regiment shoots one Korean (1).
3 rd	On a streetcar road in 45-banchi Miwa-chō, Shitaya Ward, Tōkyō City	A soldier from the Konoe regiment shoots one Korean (1).
3 rd	Near Ōshima-chō 8-chōme, Minami-Katsushika county	After three soldiers of the 14 th cavalry regiment beat three Korean leaders with their rifle butts, police and the crowd kill about 200 Koreans (1).
3 rd	Near Maruhachibashi, Ōshima-chō, Minami-Katsushika county	Six soldiers shoot six Koreans (1).
3 rd	Within Kameido station, Minami-Katsushika county	A soldier from the 13 th cavalry regiment shoots one Korean (1).
3 rd	Near Eitaibashi, Tōkyō City	Three soldiers shoot 17 Koreans (1).
Date unknown	Near Komatsugawabashi, Minami-Katsushika county	Soldiers (probably the 14 th cavalry regiment) round up people who look to them like Koreans, and kill them with machine guns. The bodies of the killed Koreans fall down from the bridge into the river (3). According to the testimony of an old woman these bodies are burned for two days and nights (4).
	Chiba Prefecture	
2 nd	Next to Shimoedogawabashi, Minami-Gyōtoku village, Higashi-Katsushika county	Two soldiers of the 15 th cavalry regiment shoot a Korean (1), (5).
3 rd	In front of the town hall of Urayasu town, Higashi-Katsushika county	A soldier of the 15 th cavalry regiment shoots three Koreans (1), (5).
4 th	On Katsushikabashi, Matsudo town, Higashi-Katsushika county	A soldier ordered by a lieutenant of the army engineering school’s educational battalion shoots a Korean (1) (5).

4 th	Northern end of Shimoedogawabashi, Minami-Gyōtoku village, Higashi-Katsushika county	Two soldiers ordered by a sergeant of the 15 th cavalry regiment shoot two Koreans (1) (5)
4 th	Northern end of Shimoedogawabashi, Minami-Gyōtoku village, Higashi-Katsushika county	Two soldiers ordered by a sergeant of the 15 th cavalry regiment shoot two Koreans (1) (5)

Numbered References:

(1) “Kantō kaigenshireibu shōhō (Detailed account of the Kantō Martial law headquarters)” (Matsuo Shōichi (editorial supervisor), Tasaki Kimitsukasa, Sakamoto Noboru (eds.), *Kantō daishinsai seifu rikugun kankei shiryō* (The Great Kantō Earthquake—Historical sources on the government and the army), Second Volume, Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1997.

(2) Kantō daishinsai ji ni gyakusatsu saretā chōsenjin no ikotsu wo hakkutsu shi tsuitō suru kai (Association of the excavation and commemoration of the remains of Koreans massacred during the Great Kantō Earthquake) (ed.), *Kaze yo, hōsenka wo hakobe* (Wind, deliver these jewelweeds), Kyōiku shiryō shuppankai, 1992.

(3) Chiba ken ni okeru Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin giseisha tsuitō chōsa iinkai (Committee for the investigation and commemoration of Korean victims and the Great Kantō Earthquake in Chiba prefecture) (ed.), *iwarenaku korosareta hitobito—Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin* (Humans killed without reason—The Great Kantō Earthquake and Koreans), Aoki Shoten, 1983.

(4) Jeong Yeongyu “dōhō no hone wo tazunete (Visiting the bones of my compatriots)” 7~8 (*Hōchi Shimbun*, December 13th and December 14th, 1923, evening editions, in Kumu, Byondon (ed.), *Kantō Daishinsai Chōsenjin Gyakusatsu Kankei Shiryō IV Chōsenjin gyakusatsu ni kansuru shokuminchi Chōsen no hannō* (Historical sources concerning the massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake IV—The reaction of colonized Korea to the massacres of Koreans), Ryokuin Shobō, 1996).

(5) Shihōshō, “Shinsaigo ni okeru keijihan oyobi kore ni kanren suru jikō chōsa (Investigation of crimes and matters related to the crimes committed in the aftermath of the earthquake)” in Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (eds.), *op. cit.*

The population, imagining ‘malcontent Koreans’, felt increasingly dependent on the army. The people were joyfully shouting ‘Banzai!, Banzai!’ when the army entered Tōkyō. (Kurosaka Katsumi, *Fukuda taishō den* (Biography of General Fukuda), Fukuda taishō den kankōkai, 1937, p.381; Kantō daishinsai ji ni gyakusatsu saretā chōsenjin no ikotsu wo hakkutsu shi tsuitō suru kai (association of the excavation and commemoration of the remains of Koreans massacred during the Great Kantō Earthquake) (ed.), *op. cit.* p.57) The *Kahoku Shimpō* in its September 5th evening edition reported that in Sendai ‘there are people who have negotiated with the Sendai Military police (Kempeitai), because a part of the population feels insecure with only the police around, and wants the army to watch out as well’. On September

20th, the Yokohama reconstruction society (Fukkōkai) passed a resolution that ‘for terrible incidents like the recent one, when the police force is unable to fulfil its duty, we desire the permanent presence of the army’. The following day, on the 21st, the Hachiōji city council passed a resolution with a similar purpose. (Hōchi Shimbun, September 29th, evening edition)

(2) Toleration of the massacre of Koreans by the police and the nationalistic ideas of the vigilante groups: ‘Because it was authorized murder before many witnesses we did it in high spirits’.

According to Yoshikawa Mitsusada’s ‘Kantō Daishinsai no chian kaiko (Reminiscences on keeping order during the Great Kantō Earthquake)’ (Hōmushō tokubetsu shinsakyoku, 1949), 3,689 vigilante groups were formed (p. 43). However, vigilante groups had also been formed in other regions besides the Kantō region, namely the Tōhoku, Tōkai and Hokuriku regions, and the number of those was probably not below five thousand.

The leaders of the vigilante groups were house and land owners in the urban areas whereas in the rural areas they were the village’s persons of influence. They emerged in various ways. There were those groups that came into being by themselves, and those which were formed, as in the case of Saitama Prefecture, by a prefectural order. Moreover, there were groups that had transformed from ‘security associations’ (*anzen kumiai* or *hoan kumiai*) into vigilante groups. The ‘security associations’ had been formed several years before the Great Kantō Earthquake by local strongmen at the town council or municipal level as sub-contracting organizations of the police based on the slogan ‘turn the police into ordinary people and turn the people into policemen’.

Regardless of the way the vigilante groups had been formed, at the beginning of September the police welcomed the vigilante groups and sanctioned their massacres of Koreans, and therefore ordinary people were also boasting about having killed Koreans.

On the night of September 2nd, a policeman of the Mita police station told a vigilante group, ‘If you see XX (Koreans), take them here to the police station. If they resist, you are allowed to O (kill) them’. (reader submission dated October 22nd, 1923, *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun*). That same night, when a friend of the lawyer Fuse Tatsuji was outdoors carrying a Japanese sword at the command of the police, a policeman came and told him that ‘if a Korean comes by, I don’t mind, if you do away with him’ (Fuse Tatsuji ‘Senjin sawagi no chōsa’, *Nihon bengoshikai rokuji*, September 1924. Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (eds.), op. cit. pp. 588—589). Kawashima Tsuyu, who was living in the Yokoami neighbourhood of Honjo ward, Tōkyō City, has given written testimony that at the time when the earthquake had occurred, a policeman was walking around telling people that ‘if you see an O (Korean), you can beat him to death’. (Furushō Yukiko (ed.), Kawashima Tsuyu ikō dainishū 1 daishinsai chokumen ki (Posthumous writings of Kawashima Tsuyu, second compilation 1—experiences during the Great Earthquake), unpublished manuscript, 1974, p. 27) Therefore, the men rallied themselves, boasting that ‘today I did away with six of them’ or ‘I was the first to hit them’. Kawashima also recorded these words. (Furushō Yukiko [ed.], op. cit. p. 27)

In Yokohama, there were conversations such as the following: ‘As of today I did away with six of them’; ‘That’s great. After all, they cannot protect themselves. Because it was an

authorized murder before many witnesses, we did it in high spirits. (Yokohama shiyakusho hensangakari, Yokohama shinsai shi (Yokohama earthquake records), Volume 5, Yokohama, 1927, p.431.)

People at the time were rabid nationalists. On September 5th, the day after a massacre of Koreans by vigilante groups at the Honjo police station, a person boasted to the policeman Arai Kenjirō that ‘don’t you think that you who habitually carry a sword with you and only dare to threaten children, won’t be able to kill a single person in the event of a national emergency? Usually we are only doing menial work, but yesterday evening we killed sixteen people!’ (Kantō daishinsai rokujū shūnen chōsenjin giseisha chōsa tsuitō ikkō iinkai (Executive committee for the investigation and commemoration of Korean victims for the 60th anniversary of the Great Kantō Earthquake (ed.), *Kakusarete ita rekishi—Kantō daishinsai to saitama no chōsenjin gyakusatsu jiken* (Hidden history—The Great Kantō Earthquake and the massacres of Koreans in Saitama), expanded edition, 1987, p.102).

On October 22nd, 1923, during the trial of perpetrators of the Korean massacre in Kumagaya at the Urawa district court, one of the defendants gave as his reason for participation that ‘at the time there was a state of confusion, and therefore I thought I had to do something for my country’ (Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun, October 22nd, evening edition). On November 4th the same year, a defendant in the Chiba district court trial, in reviewing the massacre of Koreans and the mistaken killing of Japanese in Urayasu town, Higashi-Katsushika county, Chiba prefecture, stated that ‘I had dealt the [Korean] blows with my sword and killed him, but I did so because I thought of my country’ (Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun, November 15th, Bōsō regional edition).

As described above, the population was not only inclined toward racial discrimination, but they were also extreme nationalists. The Koreans who were resisting Japan’s rule over Korea were considered ‘traitors’ and as long as the state permitted the massacre of Koreans there was nothing restraining the people from killing Koreans and the massacres were considered to be proof of their loyalty to the state.

(3) The duration and casualty numbers of the massacres of Koreans, and sexual abuse

The massacres of Koreans generally were committed from the evening of September 1st until September 6th. However, even after that, the army handed over Koreans from the Narashino internment camp to nearby peasants and let them kill them (Chiba ken ni okeru Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin giseisha tsuitō chōsa iinkai (Committee for the investigation and commemoration of Korean victims and the Great Kantō Earthquake in Chiba prefecture) (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.3—9, pp. 94-104).

The number of Korean massacre victims, according to an investigation by the Ministry of Justice, was roughly 230, but according to the final investigation report by the association in Japan for the consolation of compatriots killed in the Kantō region (*zainichi Kantō chihō risai dōhō imon han*) the number was 6,661 victims. Because the Ministry of Justice had announced its fabricated Korean riots on October 20th, 1923, the number of Korean massacre victims reported is also likely to be inaccurate. The investigation of the association is likely to arrive at nearer the real numbers than the investigation by the Ministry of Justice, but the investigation

was completed in less than two months, from the beginning of October until November 25th, and as the security authorities obstructed the investigation by hiding the bodies of slain Koreans and not handing them over to the Koreans, it is not likely that the association could do an accurate investigation. Originally, the Koreans had started the investigation under the pretext of consoling their compatriots, after the Tōkyō Metropolitan Police department had refused to allow an investigation by Koreans. (Yamada Shōji (ed.), *Kantō daishinsaiji no chōsenjin gyakusatsu—sono kokka sekinin to minshū sekinin* (The massacres of Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake—Responsibility of the state and the people), Sōshisha, 2003, pp.164—185, pp. 206—207))

If one has a look at what actually happened during the massacres, it becomes evident that these acts did not stem just from racial discrimination. At the same time there was also sexual discrimination. The vigilante groups committed various kinds of sexual abuse, such as stripping Korean women naked and making fun of them, piercing their private parts with bamboo spears and slitting open the bellies of pregnant women. Examples are given in chapter six, section three of the author's publication referred to in the previous paragraph.

4. The policy of covering up the state's first responsibility, starting on September 5th—the origin of the second responsibility of the state

The authorities were spreading information about Korean riots, but they had not been able to confirm the Korean riots. On September 2nd, at 4 pm, the commander of the first division gave instructions that 'it is not possible to confirm a situation where there are planned lawless actions' (Tōkyō shiyakusho (ed.), *Tōkyō shinsai roku - zenshū* (Tōkyō earthquake records, first part), 1926, p. 303.)

On the other hand, the massacres of Koreans started as early as the evening of September 1st, and had become unrestrained by September 2nd.

The cabinet feared that if this state of affairs continued, colonial rule of Korea might be compromised, and Japan might be criticized by the European powers and the United States. Therefore, on September 5th, the cabinet passed the second 'cabinet declaration (*naikaku kokuyū*)' banning the lynching of Koreans (historical source 12).

At the same time, the government was carrying through a policy to cover up the first responsibility of the state. This policy can be described as the following three measures.

(1) Fabrication of Korean riots

By fabricating Korean riots and making it seem as if the massacre of Koreans by Japanese had occurred as a result of Koreans rioting, the government concealed the state's responsibility for spreading false information about the alleged Korean riots. This measure was deliberated upon and decided by officials from various agencies who had assembled on September 5th in the security section of the provisional earthquake relief office (*rinji shinsai kyūgo jimukyoku keibibu*) (historical source 13). On October 20th, the government lifted the ban on newspaper articles on the massacres of Koreans it had put in force on September 5th and at the same time the Ministry of Justice made an announcement on the 'crimes' committed by

Koreans. However, no names or whereabouts were given in more than 80 percent of the crimes announced to have been committed by Koreans, and of the remaining, less than 20 percent of the crimes were still in the stages of investigation or preliminary hearings, or the accused were on trial, which means that they were suspects but had not yet been convicted as criminals. There were also many who were accused of petty crimes such as theft, embezzlement or the transportation of stolen goods (Table 5). The Ministry of Justice was trying very hard to implicate Koreans in crimes, but the lack of a foundation for their allegations was immediately obvious. However, the Ministry of Justice made an announcement of this nature and added the explanation that the massacres of Koreans had occurred because of the Korean riots (historical source 14). Many newspapers were easily taken in by this explanation, which was aimed at absolving the state of responsibility (historical source 15).

Table 5 Analysis of the credibility of the ‘crimes’ allegedly committed by Koreans during the Great Kantō Earthquake based on an investigation by the Ministry of Justice

Credibility of the evidence given for the incident	Charge	Number of incidents	Number of persons involved
(1) Name of suspect unknown	Rumours	2	2
	Arson	1	1
	Intimidation	1	30
	Rape	1	1
	Robbery	1	15~16
	Injury	1	1
	Obstruction of a governmental official in the exercise of his/her duties	1	1
	Robbery murder	1	3
	Preparation of murder	1	1
	Attempted arson, murder	1	5
	Murder	1	1
	Rape with murder	1	4
	Bridge demolition	1	1
	Violation of the Explosives Control Act	2	2
	Theft	3	16 + some
	Preparation of poisoning	1	1
	Sub-total		20
(2) One incident involving about thirty people. All names except one are unknown. The whereabouts of the identified person are unknown	Robbery	1	ca. 30
	Sub-total	1	ca. 30

(3) Name of the suspect is known. However, the whereabouts of the suspect are unknown, the suspect is at large, dead, etc.	Robbery and rape	1	1
	Attempted murder	2	3
	Sub-total	3	4
Sum of (1), (2), (3)		24	119~120
(4) Suspect who is thought to have caused the incident is under investigation (Jeong Eui-Yong), preliminary examination (O Hae-Mo) or on trial (Byeon Bong-Do), i.e. case is not decided	Robbery (Jeong Eui-Yong)	1	1
	Violation of the Explosives Control Act (O Hae-Mo) Note (1)	1	1
	Violation of the Gun and Gunpowder Control Act (Byeon Bong-Do)	1	1
	Sub-total	3	3
(5) The names of the suspects are known, and it is not recorded whether the suspects are at large, or their whereabouts unknown. In all likelihood the suspects have been arrested	Robbery	11	11
	Embezzlement	1	1
	Theft and embezzlement	2	2
	Transport of stolen goods	1	2
	Sub-total	15	16
Total		42	138~139

References: Shihōshō, ‘Shinsaigo ni okeru keijihan oyobi kore ni kanren suru jikō chōsasho (Investigation into crimes committed in the aftermath of the earthquake and related matters). When the suspects’ names in the original sources are recorded as ‘professed Mr. Kim’ or ‘professed I Wang-Won’, they have been put into category (1). Cases that are recorded as ‘a few people’, and so on, have not been included in the total number of suspects.

Note (1): O Hae-Mo was charged with violation of the Explosives Control Act because he was caught loitering near an Arakawa drainage canal with eleven sticks of dynamite and five detonators on September 2nd, 1923. On November 3rd, he was sentenced to one year in prison by the Tōkyō district court. The judgment was reported in the *Tōkyō Asahi Shimbum* (September 3rd, evening edition) as follows: ‘The filing of charges in this incident has been decided, because the person who carried the explosives mentioned above has been judged to have intended to inflict damage. However, because there was insufficient evidence with regard to the kind of damage the suspect intended to inflict, the aforementioned judgment was passed only on the charge of a violation of the Explosives Control Act.’ Therefore it is not possible to regard the case of O Hae-Mo as evidence for the Korean riots.

(2) Disavowing the state’s responsibility by arresting some of the vigilante group members and giving them only perfunctory guilty verdicts.

The decision to arrest vigilante group members, who had killed Koreans, was made by the legal committee within the security section of the provisional earthquake relief office. However, it was also decided to arrest only some of those who had killed Koreans in view of extenuating circumstances; only those who had assaulted police stations, in order to kill Koreans who had been interned by the police, were to be arrested unsparingly (historical source 16).

The arrest of vigilante group members who had killed Koreans started on September 19th and ended apparently by the end of October. The newspapers were falling in step with the arrests and published articles denouncing the vigilante groups by calling them ‘evil vigilante groups’, ‘bad vigilante groups’ or ‘murderous vigilante groups’.

On the other hand, the newspapers covered the massacres of Koreans committed by the army only very sparingly (note 1).

The results of the trials conformed to the legal committee’s wishes, and a great many of the defendants, even when they received guilty verdicts, were given suspended sentences. Only 16.5 percent received prison sentences without a stay of execution. Of those who had attacked police stations and those who had killed Japanese, about half received prison sentences without stay of execution (table 6). Lawyers were demanding those government officials who had been spreading false information to appear in court as witnesses, but in the Urawa district court, the Maebashi district court and the Shimozuma branch of the Mito district court, these demands were rejected (book of the author, p. 104—105).

Soldiers who had killed Koreans were not charged as individuals. In almost all cases, the massacres were justified by article 12 paragraph 1 of the ‘Garrison duty order (*Eiju kinmu rei*)’, under the pretext that the soldiers had been assaulted by Koreans (Shihōshō, ‘Shinsaigo ni okeru keijihan oyobi kore ni kanren suru jikō chōsasho (Investigation of crimes and matters related to the crimes committed in the aftermath of the earthquake)’ in Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (eds.), *Gendai shiryō 6: Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin* (Materials of modern history 6: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Koreans), Misuzu shobō, 1963, pp. 445—448). The corresponding text is as follows:

‘Paragraph 12. Those pursuing garrison duty are not allowed to use weapons, except under the following conditions.

1 When they become the target of violence, and it is unavoidable for self-protection.’ (Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 95)

Table 6 Analysis of the first trial judgments on incidents involving massacres of Koreans or Japanese during the Great Kantō Earthquake

Incident pattern		(1) Assault on police, massacres of Koreans	(2) Massacres of Koreans	(3) Massacres of Japanese
Number of incidents		5	17	16
Prison sentences	5 years and more	2 persons		2 persons
	4 years and more	5		1
	3 years and more	6	2 persons	12
	2 years and more	15	5	30
	1 year and more	17	9	9
	Six months and more	3		
	A. Sub-total	48	16	54
B. Stay of execution		54	81	37

A + B = C	102	97	91
Ratio of prison sentences (A / C)	47.1%	16.5%	59.3%
Defendants found not guilty	4 persons	5 persons	

(Incidents)

(1) Gunma Prefecture: Fujioka incident, Kuragano incident; Saitama Prefecture: Honjō incident, Jinbohara incident, Yorii incident

(2) Tōkyō Prefecture: Hanabatake incident, Nishi-Arai Yono-dōri incident, Sugamo town Miyashita incident, Arakawa drainage canal incident No.1, Arakawa drainage canal incident No.2, Azuma town Ōbatake incident, Azuma town Ukeji incident; Saitama prefecture: Kumagaya incident, Katayanagi incident; Chiba prefecture: Nagareyama incident, Abiko town incident, Namegawa town incident; Tochigi prefecture: Mamada station incident, Ishibashi station incident, Koganei station incident; Kanagawa prefecture: Tsurumi town incident, Yokohama-Park incident

(3) Tōkyō Prefecture: Kōhoku village incident, Ōi town Minami-Hamakawa incident, Shinagawa Ryōshi town incident, Azuma town Kasaigawa incident, Yotsuya Denma town incident, Nagata town incident, Araya town incident; Saitama prefecture: Menuuma town incident, Chiba prefecture: Fukuda village incident, Minami-Gyōtoku incident, Mikawa village incident; Gunma prefecture: Takasaki station incident, Yawata village incident; Tochigi prefecture: Ienaka village incident; Ibaraki prefecture: Kataozaki village incident, Fukushima prefecture: Saigō village incident.

(The Menuuma incident and Fukuda village incident are incidents where vigilante groups killed their victims although they knew they were Japanese. The other incidents were incidents where the victims were killed because they were mistaken for Koreans.)

(References) Reports of the Fujioka incident and various incidents in Saitama prefecture are based on the judgments. The others are based on newspaper reports. For details refer to the table 'List of judgments related to incidents of Korean massacres during the Great Kantō Earthquake' and the commentary in the supplementary volume of Yamada Shōji (ed.), *Chōsenjin gyakusatsu ni kan suru shimbun hōdō shiryō* (Historical sources of newspaper coverage of the massacres of Koreans), 2004, Ryokuin shobō.

Historical source 12 Cabinet declaration No. 2, September 5th

We hear that there are people who harbour very unpleasant feelings toward Koreans, because they think that some malcontent Koreans used the past earthquake to commit rash acts. It is undesirable that the people themselves are persecuting Koreans indiscriminately should these latter behave threateningly, without telling the army or police officers immediately and without waiting for the authorities to deal with the matter, since this would be contrary to the fundamental principle of assimilation of Japan and Korea (*nissen doka*) and is also being reported abroad. (...) (Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (editors and commentary), *Gendai shiryō 6: Kantō daishinsai to chōsenjin* (Materials of modern history 6: the Great Kantō Earthquake and Koreans), Misuzu shobō, 1994, p. 74)

Historical source 13 Agreement (top secret) regarding the Korea problem, security section of the provisional earthquake relief office

Security section

Agreement concerning the Korean problem:

1 On September 5th, the heads of those agencies involved in the matter assembled in the security section of the office and provisionally made the following exchanges regarding the stance to be taken by officials toward the public with regard to the Korean problem.

1. Officials shall internally and externally in all fora propagate the following paragraphs as true facts, and assert them as the truth for the future. (...) Even though there have been some violent acts by Koreans or cases where they tried to commit violent acts, at present there is no danger at all. Ordinary Koreans are extremely peaceful. (...)

2. Violent acts by Koreans or cases where they have tried to commit violent acts shall be investigated with all force and verified.

(Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (editors and commentary), op. cit., pp. 79—80)

Historical source 14 Explanation by the Ministry of Justice during the announcement on October 20th on ‘crimes’ committed by Korean residents in Japan:

According to the finding of official investigations, it can be acknowledged that ordinary Koreans have been by and large good citizens. However, in part there have been malcontent elements that have committed a number of crimes and as a result of these facts becoming known, criminal offences have occurred where, frequently, unfortunate Koreans and Japanese who were erroneously regarded as malcontent Koreans have been injured, in acts meant to be self-defence. This is due to the extreme fear and excitement, and the insecurity caused by the earthquake....

(Kokumin Shimbun, October 21st, 1923)

Historical source 15 Examples of article headlines wherein newspapers have been misled by the explanation of the Ministry of Justice:

Kahoku Shimbun October 21st, 1923, evening edition

Pardon for vigilante groups, found not guilty—Cases of malcontent Koreans who have in various places committed acts of violence

Jōmō Shimbun October 22nd, 1923

Plunder, rape and other acts of violence committed by some Koreans during the chaos—Due to these rash actions, even good Koreans—mistaken for malcontents—suffer greatly.

Historical source 16 September 11th Resolution of the legal committee within the security section of the provisional earthquake relief office:

1. Incidents resulting in injury that have occurred during the past disaster on judicial grounds cannot be allowed to go unprosecuted. The necessity to denounce these acts has been decided in a cabinet meeting. However, there are quite a number of mitigating circumstances, and therefore not all who have taken part in the riots should be arrested. Arrests are to be restricted to extreme cases.

2. Arrests of those who have resisted the police should be enforced vigorously.

(‘Kantō kaigen shireibu shōhō (Detailed report of the command centre under martial law for the Kantō region)’ in Matsuo Shōichi (editorial supervisor), Tasaki Kimitsukasa, Sakamoto Noboru (eds.), *Kantō daishinsai seifu rikukaigun kankei shiryō* (The Great Kantō Earthquake—Historical sources on the government, the army and navy), Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1997, p.154.)

(3) Cover up of the circumstances of the massacres of Koreans by hiding the bodies of killed Koreans and refusing to hand over the bodies of Koreans to their countrymen

When cremating the bodies of the Koreans who had been killed in the area, the police

officer Arai Kenjirō of the Honjō police station was ordered to ‘do it in a way the numbers cannot be identified’ (Kantō daishinsai rokuju shūnen chōsenjin giseisha chōsa tsuitō jigyo jikkō iinkai (Executive committee for the investigation and commemoration of Korean victims for the 60th anniversary of the Great Kantō Earthquake (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 100)

The cover-up strategy of the police was thorough also in the case of the Korean bodies buried in the dry riverbed near the Yotsugibashi bridge, which spans the Arakawa between the town of Azuma of Minami-Katsushika county (at present Yahiro, Sumida ward) and Honda village (at present Higashi-Yotsugi, Katsushika ward), both situated in the Tōkyō prefecture. Here, bodies were buried in the dry riverbed, after mass killings of Koreans by vigilante groups and the army.

During the night of September 5th, ten Japanese workers were killed inside Kameido police station by soldiers of the 13th regiment of the Narashino cavalry and their bodies were buried in the dry riverbed in the vicinity of the same Yotsugibashi bridge. On November 13th, the bereaved families, workers and lawyers came to exhume the bodies, but the police sent them away on the grounds that the bodies had already been exhumed. The next day the police exhumed the bodies and took them somewhere else. (book of the author, *op. cit.* pp. 181—183). The police did not let the bereaved families exhume the bodies themselves, because if they had done so, there was the fear that many of the Korean bodies would also have been exhumed and the scale of the massacre revealed.

According to a report of the Tōkyō police commissioner dated November 6th, 1923, the commissioner had refused the demand of the ‘association in Japan for the consolation of compatriots killed in the Kantō region’ to hand over the Korean bodies (Kang Deuk Sang, Kumu Byondon (editors and commentary), *op. cit.*, p. 326)

The security authorities hid the slain Korean bodies and did not hand them over to the Koreans, and thus they continued to cover up the circumstances of the massacres of Koreans.

(Note) 1 As far as the author knows, there are only three newspaper articles that mention the massacres of Koreans committed by the army.

The *Hōchi Shimbun*, on November 15th, 1923 (November 14th, evening edition), reported that in the Chiba district court, which was reviewing the massacre of Koreans that had occurred in Urayasu town, Higashi-Katsushika county, Chiba prefecture, Udagawa Kunimatsu said that ‘in the afternoon of September 2nd in the same town [Urayasu] near the Edogawa I saw two soldiers of the 13th regiment of the Narashino cavalry shooting one Korean, and in front of the town office I saw three shot Korean bodies’.

The *Tōkyō Asahi Shimbun*, on October 22nd, 1923, (October 21st, evening edition) and the *Kahoku Shinpō*, on October 22nd, 1923, reported that ‘the perpetrators of the killings of Koreans, which have occurred in various places in Chiba prefecture, have not only been local individuals, but rather there are signs that they have acted together with the army. There is also evidence that a regiment had lent a gun and five rounds of ammunition each to the youth organizations and the fire brigades of the towns and villages making up Higashi-Katsushika county’. They also reported that the legal and judicial affairs officer of the legal affairs section of the

First Division had conducted a detailed investigation into the matter.

Conclusion

As has been described above, the authorities had been alerted to the increase in Korean resistance to Japanese colonial rule. When the earthquake occurred, first individual police stations and then the central security authorities were caught up in the illusion that ‘malcontent Koreans’ were rioting and started to spread false information. It is not clear whether this false information originated from the authorities or from the people. However, even if the false information had first been spread by the people, had not the authorities disseminated false information with the seal of official authority, a tragedy of that scale would probably not have occurred. In this respect, it is difficult to absolve the state from its responsibility.

Furthermore the state fabricated Korean riots, placed the responsibility for the massacres on the Koreans themselves and on the vigilante groups, hid the Koreans’ bodies and did not hand them over to the Koreans. Although their kin had been slain, the bereaved Korean families could not even collect the bodies. Their bitterness is reported in the *Chūgai Nippō* on November 22nd 1923 (historical source 17).

As far as is currently known, only this one text, that of *Chūgai Nippō*, of bereaved families’ expressing their bitterness remains. The other bereaved families surely also harboured similar feelings of grief. However, this grief was hidden by the censorship of speech. Although Koreans had been slain, the bereaved families were not even allowed to express their anger.

There were also Japanese who gave sanctuary to Koreans. Most of those Japanese had probably had dealings with Koreans. However, many Japanese had taken part in the massacres of the Koreans. The fundamental reason was that the Japanese people viewed the Koreans as inferior and believed their country’s colonial rule over Korea to be legitimate; they were therefore hostile toward the Korean independence and liberation movement. In other words, the people were not independent from the state and did not hold a universal viewpoint beyond the state. For this reason they accepted the false propaganda of the state. Japanese, such as Kaneko Fumiko who had endured the pain of the double discrimination of being a woman and having led an existence at the bottom of society, through their own experience felt deep sympathy for the situation and the struggle of the Koreans; such persons who uncompromisingly criticized the discrimination within the Tennō state were, however, rare. (Yamada Shōji, *Kaneko Fumiko—jiko tennōsei kokka chōsenjin*, (Kaneko Fumiko—Self, the Tennō State, Koreans), Kageshobō, 1996.

Most of the newspapers bear great responsibility for this mental state, which was widespread, because they continually described those involved in the Korean independence movement as ‘malcontent’ or ‘treacherous’ and were unwilling to criticize the first and second responsibility the state had for the massacres of Koreans.

Today’s Japanese only display anger toward the abductions of Japanese by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and cry for economic sanctions against the DPRK; meanwhile, they give not even a single thought to the bereaved families who could not make public the grief they felt as relatives denied even the bodies of their dead, let alone to the

Koreans slain during the Great Kantō Earthquake, and to the state and the people who caused this state of affairs. Given this situation, one has to say that nothing of the problematic situation described above has been resolved.

There should be no discrimination with regard to the victims of human rights violations on the basis of the state the victims belong to. The Japanese victims who were abducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Koreans slain during the Great Kantō Earthquake and their families, the Koreans who were forcibly brought to Japan during war time and their families—for all these people redress for the violation of human rights that goes beyond considerations of nationality must be realized. In South Korea, which condemns Japan's colonial rule to the present day, there is an ongoing movement for the establishment of a peace museum that will include in its exhibits, from a universal viewpoint that goes beyond nationalist considerations, the slaughter of Vietnamese civilians by the South Korean army during the Vietnam War. Japanese can learn much from this transnational viewpoint.

Historical source 17 Grief and anger of the Korean bereaved families

It is impossible to know what kind of condolence legislation the government is now formulating for the bereaved families of those several hundred Koreans who were slain by the man-made confusion and prejudices at the time of the earthquake. However, what pains the bereaved Korean families especially is that although they have resigned themselves to enduring the insufferable bitterness of losing their slain kin, there is one thing that is hard to give up even if they try, and that is the desire to find the remains of the slain, which they have been unable to do.

Of course, among many of the bereaved families there are those who still search diligently, and are anxious to show at least some compassion; but the great majority fear that some trouble might befall them, though they cannot, as much as they try, give up searching and are therefore in a state of frustration and cry with bitterness and grief. (*Chūgai Nippō* on November 22nd, 1923. The title of the article was 'What have you done to the remains of the slain Koreans—Anger and grief of the bereaved families', according to 'what a Korean from Ōsaka related'.)

Translation: Stefan Saebel