

Chapter 3: *Gunkanjima Is an Island of Hell*—A book for children

Gunkanjima—shameful UNESCO World Heritage

It is not only grown-up films that Korea uses to spread its propaganda. In Korea, using picture books and other media, they even teach little children that “Gunkanjima” was hell. One of these books is *Gunkanjima—Shameful UNESCO World Heritage* (written by Lee Munyon, Uri Education). This book states:

Japan caused the War out of sheer madness and forcibly abducted even little boys from the Korean Peninsula to Japan. ...[Omitted] Without being told the destination of the trip, Cedori [a twelve-year old lead character in the book] was taken to Gunkanjima, a hell. ...[Omitted] Boys went down as deep as one thousand meters underground and had to dig coal, which Japan used as resources of war. They were packed within a pit, with the temperature at forty-five degrees centigrade. They were given only a small ball of rice for a day’s entire meal and they were made to work for twelve hours every day. [Author’s notes in brackets.]

There is an illustration of boys who are forced to live in an iron-latticed pen. On close examination, you can see graffiti on the outside wall of the latticed pen in Hangul, meaning “Mom, I miss you so much,” “I’m starving,” “I want to go home,” and so on.



Worse than slaves, they were treated like dogs. Sedori and other boys decided to escape, thinking that there was no way they could survive in hell and get out safely, it was better to die swallowed up by waves. But they failed and were caught by

Gunkanjima—Shameful UNESCO World Heritage

Japanese soldiers, who punished the boys by inflicting cruel torture. One boy died and his body was wrapped in cloth and thrown away. Descriptions of cruelty continue, “They were whipped by Japanese guard soldiers, blood streaming and pieces of flesh tearing off.” Boys were like ragdolls, physically and mentally, torture after torture, which lasted all night long. There are pictures of boys being whipped and hung upside down from the ceiling.

In the end, Sedori was killed in a gas explosion. Boys who survived the accident met their ends in an

equally dismal manner. After an atomic bomb was dropped over Nagasaki, they were sent to Nagasaki to clean up the debris. Thus, they were fully exposed to radiation and gradually all of them died very painful deaths.

At the end of this book, the following statements for children are made:

1. Japan took Korean young men, saying deceptively, “Here is an opportunity to earn a lot of money,” and, in fact, it was forced abduction.
2. Those who tried to escape were either washed away by waves or if they were caught, they were shot to death. [My emphasis.]
3. Now, there is no longer a way to identify victims of forced mobilized labor. We cannot remain silent, knowing Japan’s atrocities.

I will state that what is written in this book is totally untrue. However, my heart aches just to think how this picture book plants in the minds of little Korean children fear and hatred against Japan. It is very likely that these fabricated descriptions will be remembered as traumatic for the rest of their lives.

Hell Island Gunkanjima

Moreover, a nursery story for early elementary school students, titled *Hell Island Gunkanjima*, was published by Pullbit Publisher and written by Kim Yon-suk—it is selling well now. The author of this book said that the book was written based on interviews with people who once worked in Hashima (Gunkanjima). The book begins with the following scene:



Hell Island Gunkanjima

In 1900 onward, Japan aimed at Korea and took Korea in 1910, following the Treaty of the Annexation of Korea and Japan, which was forcibly concluded. At first, nobody knew what it meant. Japan took everything in sight from Korea—rice, clothes, coal, precious metals, trees and even people. No one was allowed to return home unless he or she fell seriously ill or died. How cruel it was!

The leading character’s name is Gunte. His father said to Gunte, “Those Japanese came aboard a truck and abducted people walking on the street at random. You’d better be careful.” Gunte was appalled to hear this. Gunte cried, thinking that “Even a little boy like me is to be mobilized.”

In October 1943, Gunte's father received a notice for his service and he was "forcibly taken" to Hashima. Not a penny was sent home from his father. Moreover, in April 1944, to Gunte himself and his mother received a "notice". Both of them were forcibly taken to Hashima, leaving his grandmother at home all by herself. Gunte saw his father again in Hashima. He looked black and sooty, nothing but skin and bones. Gunte could not recognize him at first.

The place allocated for them to live was on the lowest floor and was very humid, with sea water rushing in, and an iron grating for a window. They were surrounded by watch towers. His mother worked without rest, from morning till night, at the canteen, did laundry for chief workers, and cleaned up the public bath. Little boys like Gunte were made to work in the coal mines.

Workers had to buy their tools and outfits, from a pickax and a shovel to a safety cap and work clothes. Work clothes were just a loincloth. Korean miners dug coal at the foremost and narrowest point of the gallery, lying flat on the ground and using a pickax. Gunte collected coal and put it in a transfer car. The workplace was terribly hot and stifling. Gunte worked twelve hours on two small rice balls a day and was not allowed to go up to the ground surface until he accomplished his quota. If miners tried to rest for a moment, the boss hit them with a club or the handle of a pickax. Even little Gunte was hit hard many times. In the adjacent gallery, a Korean miner who had been seriously injured by the violent boss was left unattended and died. If a miner died while working, the company demanded the fee for the funeral from the deceased, without offering compensation.

Gunte cursed from the bottom of his heart those grownups who cheated him, saying, "Once you come to Hashima, you will have a house, good wages and you children can go to school." At the end of this story, Gunte was transferred to a shipyard in Nagasaki alone and he escaped from there. Eventually, an atomic bomb was dropped over Nagasaki and Japan surrendered. After the events, Gunte saw his mother again. His father had died in the coal mine and his mother was seriously ill with tuberculosis.

On the back cover of this book, a review reads, "This book will become a good guide for our Korean children to learn the true history," written by Professor Sogyon-dok of Korean Sei-jin Women's University. Thus, Korean children grow up to be "good Koreans," taking what is written in this book as facts and bearing hate against the Japanese people.

Chapter 4: The Korean mass media, using *Gunkanjima*, prompt people to have anti-Japanese feelings

***EBS* used a faked photo**

EBS, a public-oriented educational television station, equivalent to Japan's NHK E Television, took up the issue of "wartime forced abduction of Koreans" in a history program, broadcast on December 2014. However, according a reputable Japanese scholar, a photo claiming to show a "mistreated Korean" was actually of a miner from the middle of the Meiji Period.¹

This same photo was also used when Korean CJ Entertainment promoted its film *Gunkanjima* on the world's largest electronic billboard at Times Square in New York City. Today, a relief of this photo is engraved on a monument (refer to the photo on the next page) in the square in front of Yongsan Station in Seoul, the terminal station for KTX (Korean Train Express).

MBC's feature on *Gunkanjima*

On February 8, 2017, Korean MBC Television broadcast a feature on *Gunkanjima* during its *Evening News* program. And in the feature, the following were stated:

In the gallery over one-thousand meters deep underground, the temperature rose to over 45 degrees Celsius and it was like a sauna.

Inside the coal mine, it was so narrow that miners could not stretch out while toxic gas frequently erupted.

And the graffiti as mentioned in *Gunkanjima—shameful UNESCO World Heritage*, "I'm starving," "I want to go home," and "Mom, I miss you so much" were found on the walls inside the coal mines.

However, several photos used as evidence of mistreatment of Koreans, in fact, had nothing to do with *Gunkanjima*. According to Professor Miwa Munehiro of Kyushu University, what MBC broadcast showing "miners working in Hashima (*Gunkanjima*)" were in fact of miners strip-mining at Kaizuka Mine in Fukuoka Prefecture.

¹ *Sapiro* (published by Shogakukan), March-April 2018 edition.



The photo taken by the author:
A photo engraving on a monument in the square in front of Yongsan Station, which was taken in a coal mine during the Meiji Period, not at Hashima (Gunkanjima), and misrepresented as a “mistreated mobilized worker.”

However, several photos used as evidence of mistreatment of Koreans, in fact, had nothing to do with Gunkanjima. According to Professor Miwa Munehiro of Kyushu University, what MBC broadcast showing “miners working in Hashima (Gunkanjima)” were in fact of miners strip-mining at Kaizuka Mine in Fukuoka Prefecture. A photo showing a male miner lying in a narrow space is from Chikuho Coal Mine during the middle of the Meiji Period. Mr. Tanaka Naoki, Professor Emeritus of Nihon University, who is well-versed in coal mining, points out, “At Hashima, where coal mining was highly mechanized, manual labor was unheard of, even absurd.”²

In the same program, a photo which shown during narration, “Constant whipping left snake-like scars on our bodies,” was the same photo used by the aforementioned Korean civic group, submitted to the UNESCO Committee to prevent Japan’s inscription to the List. In fact, the photo is from 1926, from an article in the *Asahikawa Newspaper*, which reported an incident of a Japanese worker being abused to death at a road construction site in Hokkaido, the northernmost part of Japan.³

The Sanken Newspaper confronted MBC with these facts, sending “a letter of questions,” including the fact that the photos were taken elsewhere-- not Hashima (Gunkanjima). However, MBC’s rebuttal was that, “Although the photos were taken elsewhere, in the context that Koreans were forcibly abducted and suffered tremendous damages, these photos are valuable historical sources, which enable

² From *The Sankei Newspaper, morning edition*, dated April 12, 2017.

³ *Seiron*, June 2017 issue, “This time, in Japan, a statue of forcibly mobilized workers...” by Sugita Mio.

us to have a glimpse of history.” MBC has yet to show any reflection on its error.⁴

It is undeniable that Korean television promotes anti-Japanese thinking by continuously broadcasting assertions of so-called historical facts, which are completely false, which support Korea.

Interviews by *Yonhap News*

Besides Korean television, Korean news busily disseminates Gunkanjima-related news. *Yonhap News*, dated July 27, 2017 reported interviews with former Korean coal miners who had worked in Hashima (Gunkanjima) following orders for mobilization, prior to the showing of the film *Gunkanjima*:

Mr. Choe, who had been mobilized in 1943, said, “I spent three years in Hashima surrounded by the seas, living a ‘prison life.’ I worked wearing nothing but underwear.” Most of the workers at Hashima Coal Mines run by Mitsubishi were forcibly abducted Koreans or Chinese. According to the official record, about 800 Koreans were taken to Hashima between 1939 and 1945, out of which 134 Koreans died.

Most of the Koreans who were made to work in Hashima were engaged in mining coal at the deepest tip of the gallery or in burying the former coal mining sites so that they would not collapse. ...[Omitted] Gunkanjima was surrounded by seas and was called a “prison island” or an “island of hell.” Some tried to escape from the island, but they either drowned or were captured before they were able to safely reach land.

Mr. Lee recollected life there, saying, “There was a small island next to Hashima and this island was called crematory. Those who died during work or in failed attempts to escape were cremated there.”

Mr. Lee continued, “After I stayed in Hashima for eight months or so, I became twenty years old and got drafted by the Japanese Army. How rigorous it was [the forced labor in Hashima]! I even felt relieved when I got drafted by the Army.”

The Japanese side referred to the words of “forced to work” and admitted that there was forced abduction during a meeting of the World Cultural Heritage Committee and promised to set up an information board explaining the forced mobilization by December 2017... [Omitted] There are only five months to go before their promise is due, but the plan to carry

⁴ *The Sankei Newspaper, morning edition*, dated April 12, 2017.

out the promise yet to be announced.

Yonhap News concluded this article with the following comment from Kim Yon-bon, Director of the Foundation for Victims of Imperial Japan's Forced Mobilization:

Japan maintains that the compensation to the victims has been completed using \$300 million Japan provided following the Agreement concerning the Settlement of Problems in regard of Property and Claims between Japan and Korea and Economic Cooperation, which was concluded in 1965. However, at that time, the money was spent on public enterprises such as POSCO⁵ and Korean Roads Corporation, and most of the victims and their bereaved families were not able to receive money... [Omitted] The Japanese companies that have benefited from the Agreement on Claims should start supporting the victims of forced mobilization and their bereaved families from now on... [Omitted]

As I will explain later, the issue of compensation between Japan and Korea has been finally and completely resolved by the Agreement Concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard of Property and Claims between Japan and Korea and Economic Cooperation. *Yonhap News* not only reported the testimonies of former workers as facts, but also manipulated information as if the Japanese Government and companies had not fulfilled their responsibilities. Thus, they are misleading Koreans and encouraging the view of abandoning the official agreement concluded between the two countries.

⁵ POSCO is a former Pohang Steel-making Company, which was established in 1973 through financial aid from Japan and rapidly developed, with technical assistance exclusively from Shinnittetsu (currently Shinnittetsu Sumikin), to become the world's leading steel manufacturer.

Chapter 5: Assertions that Gunkanjima was an island of hell was originally disseminated from Japan

Listen to Gunkanjima

In fact, stories that Gunkanjima was an island of hell originated mostly from Japan.

There is a book entitled *Listen to Gunkanjima—A Record of Forcibly Abducted Koreans and Chinese in Hashima* (hereinafter *Listen to Gunkanjima*). The book was published in 2011 by the Society to Vindicate the Human Rights of Korean Residents in Nagasaki. The book contains testimonies of Korean workers who had been allegedly abducted to Hashima and the results of original analysis of ‘cremation and burial permits’ which had been found there and brought back to the mainland after the coal mines were closed. The introduction of the book states:

We are not in a position to act against the inscription of Gunkanjima to the World Heritage, but we cannot easily accept the current all-out attempts to realize the inscription while concealing the history of atrocities committed during the War. When we mention the assets of industrial modernization, we must not forget that Japan’s modernization was one and the same with invasion. It is not too much to say that Hashima was a microcosm of modern Japan. Besides, “World Heritage,” as is true of the Auschwitz concentration camp, should become universally valuable only when the heritage includes the dark side of history as well.

Unless it is based on the correct recognition of history, it is impossible to inscribe the site to the World Heritage.

Thus, this book regards Gunkanjima as the same as Auschwitz and presents statements such as “people came out of the island only when they were seriously ill or dead,” and “At the dead end of a gallery, Koreans mined coal, wearing nothing but a loincloth, lying down on the stomach or sideways” as facts, which were “testimonies” dispensed by the Korean media. Since the Japanese themselves are condemning Japan’s past, the book is most convenient as evidence against Japan for Koreans. It is without doubt that the film *Gunkanjima* and picture books for children are based on this book.



Listen to Gunkanjima

It is true, however, that the book also contains testimonies that are based on facts and I will carefully examine the “facts” later on in this book.

Photo documentation—Chikuho, Gunkanjima, forced abduction of Koreans and later years

There is another book, titled *Photo documentation—Chikuho, Gunkanjima, Forced Abduction of Koreans and later years* (hereinafter, *Chikuho/Gunkanjima*), written by Hayashi Eidai (Gen Shobo).



At the beginning of the book, the author asserts: “So far, how many of the Japanese people have thought of the sufferings of Korean families whose family members were forcibly abducted? The issue of forced abduction, which is impermissible in terms of humanity, was an extension of Imperial Japanese colonial policy. We should firmly bear this fact in mind.” The testimonies in the book include the following:

Chikuho, Gunkanjima

“[About burials] A co-miner was killed in an accident and he was cremated. Then a man in charge of labor who accompanied us to watch the cremation ordered us to scoop the ashes with a shovel and throw them into a unused mine. We did as we were ordered.”

“During the War, to watch those who tried to escape, armed legionnaires stood on their guard.”

“When Chinese miners went on a hunger strike, refusing to enter the mine, the company requested military action. Reportedly, there occurred a fierce battle between the Chinese and the Omura Regiment that came to repress the riot.”

In making of the film *Gunkanjima*, this book seems to have provided much referential information. The testimonies in *Chikuho/Gunkanjima* will also be examined later in this book.

Nagasaki Peace Museum in memory of Oka Masaharu

In Nagasaki City, there is a facility called the Nagasaki Peace Museum in memory of Oka Masaharu. About this museum, the following article appeared in the *Sankei Newspaper*, dated June 7, 2017.

It often happens that media reports that are far from true appear, because false information is disseminated from Japan. A typical source of false information is the Nagasaki Peace Museum in memory of Oka Masaharu. The museum is located along a slope a little ways from

the site of the Martyrdom of the 26 Saints of Japan at Nishizaka in Nagasaki City. Foreigners, one after another, visit this museum... [Omitted] In the museum, comfort women are described as “sex slaves,” and the follow is stated: “Young Korean women who had been hunted like animals (allegedly there were two hundred thousand or more of them).” Regarding the “Great Nanjing Massacre,” excerpts from a Chinese textbook state, “Murdered victims amounted to more than three hundred thousand.”

The museum was opened in October 2007 by Nagasaki University Professor Emeritus Takazane Yasunori, who headed the Society to Vindicate the Human Rights of Korean Residents in Nagasaki, following the will of Oka Masaharu, a peace activist and clergyman... [Omitted] Regarding Takazane, who died in April 2017, the local *Nagasaki Newspaper* reported Takazane’s death on its front page and published a generous biography in its social section, with the headline, “History of perpetration—Contributes to clarify the truth.”

In October 2015, Takazane told a Korean student who visited the museum, “Koreans were made to live in extremely humid and poor environment on Gunkanjima.” The museum describes Hashima, “On an island isolated from land, forcibly abducted people lived and worked in a cruel and poor labor environment beyond imagination, struggling for survival, under violence constantly inflicted upon them. They called Hashima ‘hell’.”

Korea used Takazane’s activities. In March 2004, the Korean National Assembly enacted the “Special law concerning the investigation of the truth about the forcibly mobilized victims under the Imperial Japanese occupation” and established a committee to engage in truth-finding activities. The findings of the committee was announced in a report on June 2016 and the names of Takazane and the peace museum were clearly stated as overseas inquiry members... [Omitted]

Takazane also engaged in exchanges with North Korea. In November 2016, he acted as executive chairman of a concert when North Korean Kumgang-san Musical Company performed in Nagasaki... [Omitted] Takazane was also related to currently special-assigned professor of Ritsumeikan University Suh Sung, who was arrested by the Korean Army Security Command Office as a North Korean spy and agent and imprisoned as political prisoner in 1970. Takazane was also a member of the Society to Save Suh Brothers, which aimed to rescue the imprisoned So-sun and his younger brother... [Omitted]

I have visited this museum. I was terrified, in that this museum was the very stronghold of a powerful

anti-Japanese ideology. In addition to many foreign visitors, there are Japanese junior and senior high school students who also frequent this museum, led by teachers of Japan Teachers' Union. Thus, "Japanese atrocities" are endlessly disseminated to the world from within Japan.