

Disputes and Runaways at the Sado Mines as reported in the *Special Higher Police Monthly Report*

Disputes

Special Higher Police Monthly Report, March 1940 (p.52)

Mitsubishi Mining Corporation's Sado mines, Aikawa Town, Sado County, Niigata Prefecture
40 out of 98 Korean workers participated in the dispute.

Occurred on February 17, resolved on the same day.

The camp lacked the facilities to accommodate all the Korean laborers, requiring about 40 workers to temporarily use the new dormitory run by employees of the mines. In addition to this, there were also constant complaints that the contract system wages were insufficient. On February 17, the 40 lodgers, led by Choi Jae-man, demanded measures to address this. Although it developed into a tense standoff, the mine accepted their requests, and the situation was resolved on that day.

Special Higher Police Monthly Report, April 1940 (p.182)

Sado Gold Mine, Kirinai Town, Sado County, Niigata Prefecture

All 97 Korean workers took part in the dispute.

Incident occurred on April 11 outbreak, settled on April 13

After receiving their wages for March, the workers demanded a wage increase and went on strike, claiming that the conditions had changed from when they applied for the job. The strike was settled through the competent mediation of the police department, and the company was to improve workers' conditions. The three ringleaders were deported to Korea.

Special Higher Police Monthly Report, May 1942 (p.69)

Mitsubishi Mining Corporation's Sado mines, Aikawa Town, Sado County, Niigata Prefecture
More than 160 of the 850 Korean laborers participated in the dispute.

On April 29, Ri Han-bong and two other Korean laborers were discovered gambling with hanafuda (traditional Japanese playing cards) at the Soai dormitory where they were staying by labor section employee Nagase Kihachiro and were taken to the police station. However, more than 160 fellow Korean laborers stormed the dormitory office in an attempt to free them, injuring Nagase and breaking about 36 windows in the office. The local police dispatched officers to the dormitory, arresting eight of the ringleaders and defusing the situation. Since then, work has resumed and continues as usual, and although there are no signs of unrest, we continue to be on the alert.

Runaways

Special Higher Police Special Monthly Report, November 1942 (p.100)

November 7

Four Korean laborers working at the Mitsubishi Sado Mining operations in Aikawa Town, Sado County, Niigata Prefecture, were dissatisfied with low wages and food provisions and planned to flee. When they asked their co-workers for assistance, the Koreans cheated them out of ¥130 JPY as a commission and forced them to flee. Although their cases are pending prosecution, charges are to be deferred in all cases.

Special Higher Police Monthly Report, February 1943 (p.105)

January 11

Dissatisfied with the low wages as compared to those of free laborers, four female Korean laborers working at the Mitsubishi Sado Mining operations in Sado County, Niigata Prefecture, planned to flee. They enlisted the help of a Korean antique dealer and two Japanese fishermen, paying each of them ¥75 JPY as commission. They used a fishing motorboat to escape but were apprehended, and the persons involved were arrested and sent to the police station. Two of the Korean fugitives were today sentenced to a fine of ¥40 JPY. The other two escaped again, and the three who assisted them in their escape were not prosecuted due to a lack of evidence.

Special Higher Police Monthly Report, May 1943 (p.122)

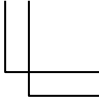
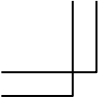
April 14

On March 29 of this year, it was discovered that Korean laborer Xin Tin-chen and one other worker at the Mitsubishi Sado Mining operations in Sado County, Niigata Prefecture, had abandoned their workplace on March 26 this year and fled. They were arrested and sent to the district attorney's office for breaking the law.

Special Higher Special Monthly Report, May 1943 (p.123)

April 25.

Kanayama Seiji (19 years old at the time), a Korean laborer at the Mitsubishi Sado Mining operations in Sado County, Niigata Prefecture, abandoned his workplace on February 27 of this year and fled. He was found and arrested on April 18 and sent to the district attorney's office for breaking the law.


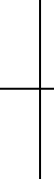


May 10

Eikin Kawamoto (35 years old at the time), a Korean laborer Mitsubishi Sado Mining operations in Sado County, Niigata Prefecture, abandoned his workplace on the 1st of this month and fled. He was found and arrested two days later on the 3rd and sent to the district attorney's office for breaking the law.

Commentary on *Special Higher Police Monthly Report*

Historical records of disputes and runaways involving the Korean laborers who worked at the Sado gold mines still exist. The Special Higher Police Monthly Report, a primary source compiled by the Public Security Section of the Security Division of the Home Ministry Police Affairs Bureau at the time, records three cases of disputes and five cases of desertion.



In all of the cases involving disputes that occurred in 1940, it is clear that management at the Sado mines either acceded to the demands of the Korean workers or held discussions with them. Because wages at the time were based on a contract system, the workers did not immediately receive high wages after arriving in Japan, but this was no different for the Japanese. The document *Concerning Korean Personnel Management* reveals that once they acquired experience, they were paid up to ¥169.95 JPY per month (average ¥83.88 JPY).

The 1942 dispute was caused by Korean laborers engaging in gambling, which was prohibited. When a Japanese labor section employee attempted to take the three Koreans who had gambled to the authorities, more than 160 Koreans formed a mob, smashing windows and other objects. The Japanese only censured the eight ringleaders and did not violently suppress them. The three cases of disputes show that Koreans were not treated as slave laborers.

Regarding fugitives, it is noted that in two of the five cases, the motive was to move to a better-paying job. Since the wages were lower than those of free laborers, they paid money to receive assistance in running away. In light of the prevailing wages at the time, the money they paid in these instances was quite a significant sum, indicating that Korean workers' wages were duly paid.

In the remaining three cases of desertion, although their motives are not stated, it is clear that these workers broke the labor contract and ran away. The mobilization of Korean laborers was a contract in accordance with wartime regulations, and because breaking their contracts was in violation of the law, these fugitives were subsequently arrested.