



# Private Yokoi's War and Life on Guam, **1944-1972**

The story of the Japanese Imperial  
Army's longest WWII survivor in the  
field and later life

## Omi Hatashin



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on Guam, **1944-1972**

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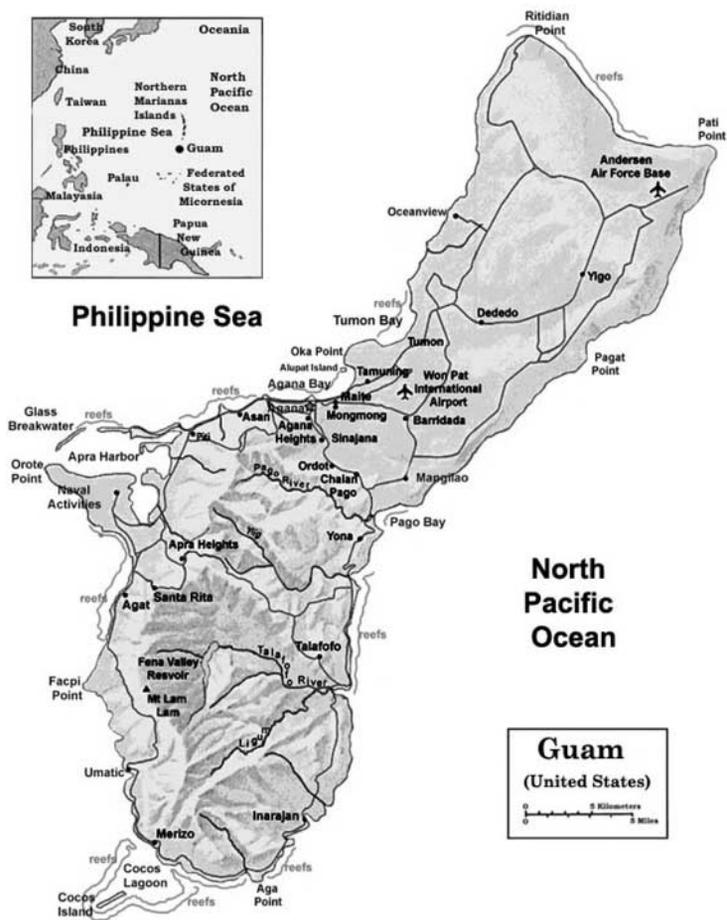


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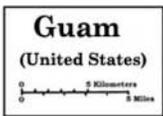
PRIVATE YOKOI'S WAR  
AND LIFE ON GUAM, 1944–1972  
THE STORY OF THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY'S LONGEST  
WWII SURVIVOR IN THE FIELD AND LATER LIFE



## Philippine Sea



## North Pacific Ocean



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THE STORY OF THE JAPANESE  
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SURVIVOR IN THE FIELD AND  
LATER LIFE



*by*

Omi Hatashin



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IN THE FIELD AND LATER LIFE  
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# CHRONOLOGY



- 1915 (Shō-ichi's age) Born on 31 March in rural Japan (later a part of Nagoya)
- 1918 (3) His parents divorced and he was brought up in his maternal aunt's family
- 1927 (12) Left general primary school, his mother married a Yokoi
- 1929 (14) Left higher primary school
- 1936 (21) Became independent as a tailor following years of apprenticeship
- 1937 (22) *Japan invaded Peking in July, and Nanking in December*
- 1938 (23) Called up in May to serve in China as a logistics serviceman
- 1939 (23–4) Demobilized in March and resumed his work as a tailor
- 1941 (26) *Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June; Shō-ichi was called up in August to serve in Manchuria; Japan attacked the USA, etc. in December*
- 1943 (27) Lance Corporal (1 March)
- 1944 (29) Sent to Guam in March; US invasion on 21 July; organized Japanese resistance ceased on 11 August; Shō-ichi's isolated Platoon tried to get off Guam unsuccessfully; officially announced dead on 30 September (Corporal)
- 1945 (30) *Japan surrendered on 15 August; call for surrender (disbelieved)*
- 1946 (31) Shō-ichi's team became three strong; call for surrender (disbelieved)
- 1947 (32) Sergeant (2 May, unknown to Shō-ichi)

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- 1950 (35) Began to live in an underground hole (made seven holes in total by 1960)
- 1960 (45) Shō-ichi settled in his eighth hole  
*Two Japanese soldiers were discovered on Guam and search was organized*
- 1962 (46) Typhoon Karen devastated the island in November
- 1963 (48) Tried unsuccessfully to get off Guam
- 1964 (49) The last two surviving colleagues died and Shō-ichi was left alone
- 1972 (56–7) Found on 24 January on Guam; repatriated to Japan on 2 February; married Mihoko on 3 November
- 1974 (59) Stood for the Upper House elections, lost (July)  
Became known as a 'critic of wasteful modern lifestyle'
- 1991 (76) Invited to the Emperor Akihito's garden party as a potter (9 May)
- 1997 (82) Died in Nagoya on 22 September

## LIST OF PLATES



1. Yokoi, Private First Class, 1941
2. Yokoi at the time of his 'discovery', January 1972
3. Surroundings of Yokoi's tunnel, January 1972
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14. A variety of Yokoi's utensils and tools
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19. Yokoi demonstrating replica room
20. Yokoi in his pottery
21. Yokoi and his wife in later life



## INTRODUCTION



This book is about the life and strange, surprising adventures of Shō-ichi Yokoi, a tailor. He was drafted into the Japanese Army in 1938 and was found alive and on his own in 1972 on Guam, a small US colony in the Pacific. It was nearly twenty-eight years after the US recaptured the island in 1944. He married ten months after his return to Japan, ran for a seat in Japan's Upper House in the 1974 elections, and died in 1997 at the age of eighty-two.

Apart from the narrative account of his life, this book tries to answer various questions:

1. Why did he refuse to surrender for as long as twenty-eight years?
2. How did he manage to survive on his own for so long?
3. What sort of person was he, and what sort of person was his wife?
4. Are there any lessons for the future?

By way of reference, Guam is a small volcanic and coral island of 129 square miles (334.3 square kilometres). It is the southernmost of a chain of tiny islands, extending northwards, which include Rota, Tinian, Saipan, etc. in order of distance from Guam. Known as the Mariana Islands, they extend further along the same tectonic plate to Iwō-jima (sulphur-island), and ultimately to the Izu Peninsula, which once collided with Japan, and thereby created the beautiful volcano of Mt Fuji. Guam is 1,342 miles (2,160 kilometres) from Tokyo; 1,392 miles (2,240 km) from Manila; 2,873

miles (4,624 km) from Sydney and 5,031 miles (8,096 km) from San Francisco.

Guam was formerly, as now, a US enclave in the Pacific, surrounded by the Mariana Islands in the north and the Caroline and Marshall Islands in the south, all of which were administered by Japan under the League of Nations mandate before the Second World War. Japan conquered Manchuria in September 1931, invaded Peking in July 1937 and Nanking in December 1937, before waging war against the United States, the British Empire and the Netherlands in December 1941. The process leading up to the decision to go to war was quite complex; for example, in the summer of 1941, Japan was seriously thinking of invading the Soviet Union because Japan's ally, Nazi Germany which invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, urged Japan to do the same from the east. Japan had been embroiling itself in a protracted war of attrition in China since at least 1937, and this turned out to be a decisive factor in influencing Japan's decision-making as far as war with the West was concerned. Japan found it necessary, wrongly, to stop the small Allied supplies to China across Burma in order to win their war against Chiang Kai-shek, and thought it necessary, arguably also wrongly, to neutralize the US Navy in the Pacific before carrying out the conquest of the mineral-rich Anglo-Dutch colonial possessions in South East Asia in order for Japan to achieve its logistical self-sufficiency in winning a long-term full-scale war in China. Japan hoped, wrongly again, that Germany alone was sufficient to crush the Soviet Union.

The Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base in the US colony of Hawaii in the middle of the Pacific took place on Monday, 8 December 1941 in standard Japanese time, which was still Sunday, the 7th in the US. A few hours later, Japanese troops invaded Guam. Six months later, in early June 1942, at the battle of Midway (midway between California and China), Japan lost its best aircraft carriers with all the best trained pilots. Admiral Yamamoto commanding the Combined Fleet was shot down over the Solomon Islands in 1943. The US's effective destruction of Japan's major naval air base on Truk, part of the central Caroline Islands, on 17 February 1944, prompted Japan to fortify very hastily the Mariana

Islands, Saipan and Guam in particular, with the new 31st Army, consisting of divisions from Manchuria. The 31st Army was placed under the overall command of Admiral Koga, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet who was killed in an air crash in a low pressure weather zone over the western Caroline Islands on 31 March 1944. So far, so bad, was the background setting of the stage on which the strange, surprising adventures of Shō-ichi Yokoi were to unfold.

The US invaded Saipan on 15 June 1944. Being outmanoeuvred, Japan then committed nearly all of its surviving naval air power to counter the US invasion. In the resulting battle of the Philippines Sea near Saipan and Guam, Japan effectively lost the last ounce of its capacity to fight a modern naval battle. The Japanese resistance on Saipan ceased on 7 July 1944. General Tōjō, the Prime Minister who had waged the war against the United States and the British and Dutch Empires in December 1941, stepped down on 18 July 1944. This was merely the beginning of the end of Japan's war.

On 21 July 1944, US troops, 54,891-strong, comprising all ranks, invaded Guam. The Commander of Japan's 31st Army there died on 11 August 1944. The saga of the imperial Japanese decision-making continued for more than a year up to 15 August 1945 in standard Japanese time, which was 14 August in the United States, when the emperor's announcement of surrender was finally broadcast. By then, out of the 20,810-strong Japanese garrison on Guam, the US marines counted 18,377 dead and 1,250 taken prisoner of war, leaving 1,183 unaccounted for.<sup>1</sup> Japan was disarmed and democratized. All the Japanese mandatory territories in the Pacific were transferred to the UN strategic trusteeship, with the United States as a trustee. While Guam remained an important strategic operation centre for the US armed forces engaged in subsequent wars in Korea and Vietnam, some Japanese soldiers continued living a hidden life on the same island, following the Japanese 'no surrender' code. The repatriation of Japanese servicemen from the zones held by the US was relatively smooth. However, sporadic 'discovery' and repatriation of Japanese continued throughout the 1950s, and as late as 21 May 1960, two Japanese soldiers were discovered on Guam.

Guam is, indeed, a calm, beautiful, tropical island (which makes

all of this period of history appear a grotesque mismatch) and hopefully encourages everyone to be environment-friendly. ‘The last of the Japanese Mohicans’, who emerged from the Guam jungle in 1972, appeared, at times, just like many of the endangered species on such an island.

Shō-ichi Yokoi has tended to be confused with two other members of the Japanese army who had similarly refused to surrender until 1974. These were Second-Lieutenant Hiro-o Onoda who had commanded a guerrilla task force in the Philippine island of Lubang near Manila and was repatriated in March 1974, and Suniyon (also known as ‘Teruo Nakamura’ in Japanese and ‘Li Guang-Hui’ in Chinese, all meaning ‘shining man’), from the Ami tribe of Taiwan. Suniyon was found cultivating crops on his own on the Indonesian island of Morotai in December 1974. Surprisingly, he was able to communicate with the local Morotai people in his native Ami language of Taiwan. Overall, Onoda, an intelligence officer, appears to have suited the popular stereotype of Japanese ‘no surrender’ fighters, while the other two, Shō-ichi Yokoi, a logistics serviceman, and Suniyon, a tribal soldier, failed to do so. The latter two were even accused of ‘cowardice’ after their repatriation. But were they really ‘cowards’?

One of the main purposes of the publication of this book is to shed a different light on the reality of the war in the Pacific, which was arguably an example of the ‘clash of civilizations’, with specific reference to a particular ‘no surrender’ man refusing to surrender for so long apparently in order to maintain his ‘honour’. To say the least, his survival was different from the more stereotypical Japanese ‘kill and become a martyr’ operation of *kamikaze* suicide bombers. This book may also assist the reader in looking at the life of an individual and aspects of modern civilization from an entirely different perspective.

### **Drafting and Translation Processes**

The Japanese publisher, Bungei Shunjū, Tokyo, prepared a draft of Shō-ichi Yokoi’s biography the year after his return to Japan. Shō-ichi was not satisfied with it, saying, ‘no one can survive for

twenty-eight years in such a way'. Subsequently, his wife, Mihoko, wrote down his stories more fully, and to his satisfaction. Bungei Shunjū made copies of the manuscript sources of the Japanese Defence Agency's official military history relating to Guam available to the Yokois.

The present book contains a full English translation of Shō-ichi Yokoi's autobiography, which was originally published by Bungei Shunjū in 1974, namely, Chapters 1 to 17, describing his earlier life, war and survival up to 1972. Omi Hatashin, Shō-ichi Yokoi's nephew by marriage, authored this introduction and wrote about Shō-ichi's life back in Japan in the three sections entitled, 'Afterwards'.

This translation represents a team effort. First among these 'players' must be Takaoki Hatashin, another of Yokoi's nephews by marriage, who provided the first complete English translation of Shō-ichi Yokoi's autobiography. His translation was helped by Osamu Nishimura, who undertook experiments to verify the method of making fire, which Yokoi described in Chapter 13, p. 148.

Second, Wakako Higuchi, MA (Australian National University), a resident historian on Guam, who specializes in the modern international history of the island, first proposed the publication of the autobiography in English. She supplied, as far as she was able to identify after consultation with relevant local specialists, the current English names of the place names which appear in this book, as well as both the English and *Chamorro* names of local plants on Guam.

In fact, Shō-ichi Yokoi referred to local Guam plants sometimes in their local *Chamorro* names, and sometimes in Japanese names, which he often invented. By contrast, he referred to local place names almost always in the way in which the Japanese Army called them. This contrast is a rather interesting one. It would seem that Shō-ichi Yokoi remembered the place names as a member of the Japanese Army occupying Guam, whereas he remembered the local plants principally for reasons of personal survival.

Third, Omi Hatashin reviewed both the original text and the translation, and whatever revisions were required. Fourth,

Christopher C. E. R. Barder, MA (Cantab), PGCE, JP, proofread the English text in the presence of Omi Hatashin. Some points, therefore, were discussed between the two and decisions made. Christopher Barder proceeded on the assumption that Omi Hatashin had made sure that the language and nuances of the original text were accurately conveyed into English. The principle was that the text should remain a 'translation', as Shō-ichi Yokoi's stories were not those of an English-speaking man shipwrecked and cast on an isolated Pacific island. This was a deliberate choice, because this book is concerned with Japan's war as an example of the 'clash of civilizations'; Shō-ichi Yokoi's stories would never have been the same, if he had thought and acted in the manner in which an Englishman in his position would have acted.

Omi Hatashin bears the ultimate responsibility for the quality of this translation.

Dr Ann Waswo encouraged and assisted the process by making Omi Hatashin a member of the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, and a senior associate member of St Antony's College, Oxford, 2004–2005.

As regards Shō-ichi Yokoi's later life back in Japan, Mrs Mihoko Yokoi supplied all the relevant medical records, newspapers, magazines, photographs, etc. to Omi Hatashin who authored the relevant part. Mrs Yokoi also supplied Shō-ichi Yokoi's original illustrations to assist the translation, and which appear in the plate section herein.

My thanks are also due to Professor Arthur Stockwin for introducing me to Global Oriental and for his support and encouragement over many years; to Paul Scott for making his copy of Asahi Newspaper's book on Yokoi available to me; to Dr Mark Rebeck for lending me Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom*; to Kensuke Haga on Guam who took some photographs of Guam's plants and topography which feature in this book; and to Paul Norbury and David Blakeley of Global Oriental. Without their help, this book might never have appeared.

Omi Hatashin  
*Kyoto and Oxford, Autumn 2008*

## CHAPTER 1

# EARLY DAYS (1915–1941)



I was born on 31 March 1915 to a tailor named Yamada in a village which was later annexed to Nagoya City in central Japan. I do not know what happened to my parents. They divorced when I was three months old. My mother had returned to her home leaving me in my father's house. My father did not take care of me at all. My paternal grandmother searched around from among her neighbours for someone who was willing to breast-feed me. Tired and weary, she eventually deposited me at my mother's house when she was away. (Japan was so safe at that time that houses were rarely locked.) My mother, perhaps thinking that I was an impediment to her prospect of new marriage, carried me back to her former husband's house. After being shuttled several times in this way between my father and mother, I was eventually settled in my mother's house. In fact, by that time, her parents were no longer alive. My mother was merely lodging in the house of her older sister who was living with her two daughters, Akiye and Kinu.

Nowadays, nobody bothers about a woman becoming divorced. However, in rural Japan in the early decades of the twentieth century, a divorced woman was regarded as a sort of social outcast. The social pressure caused my mother to feel uneasy about lodging in her older sister's house. She soon found a job as a maidservant in the town and left the house. Once again I was left behind. This time my cousins, Akiye and Kinu, assumed the arduous task of looking after me.

Thus, I was brought up without parents, without siblings and

without a home. I was often mocked and abused as a 'fatherless child'. Naturally, I became withdrawn, incommunicative and silent. As my mother's family name, Ōshika, sounded in Japanese like an interrogative phrase, 'dumb?', my school colleagues tended to ask me 'Shō-ichi, are you dumb (oshika)? Or deaf?' How annoyed and humiliated I felt! I wished I had had an ordinary family life living with both parents.

When I was eleven, my mother married Mr Jūsan Yokoi in Sennonji, a village which was later absorbed by Nagoya. Since he had no children, she brought me with her. 'At last', I thought, 'I can live with my mother in my own home!' To my chagrin, my delight was soon to disappear. The Yokois turned out not to be a place where I was able to live peacefully. My stepfather was such a good person that he was often called 'Buddha' Jūsan. However, he was such a soft, kindly man that he was unable to protect my mother and me from the other people in the family. Indeed, I was not permitted to call myself 'Yokoi' until I reached conscription age. I was not a legitimate member of the family. I also saw how often my mother found herself in trouble. Indeed, I frequently asked myself why on earth my mother had married anew. Her new marriage caused us to suffer only bitter humiliation and misery. Had she waited for just a few more years, until I had left school, I would have been able to work and take care of her.

In March 1929, I left Tomita Higher Primary School. I was fourteen years old then. To tell the truth, I had no desire to stay at the Yokois. However, my mother did not want me to go off and disappear. Following her advice, I commuted for a year to Aichi Abacus School. I attended not only its daytime class, but also its evening class, and obtained a licence to teach. In the meantime, my stepfather, mother and I discussed my future. 'A duckling grows up alone', I said, 'I would like to be a tailor like my father was.' My natural father died when I was seven. 'Although my bond with my natural father was tenuous', I continued, 'I believe that he will support me from heaven. If I were to stay in Nagoya, my determination will be at risk, since it is too easy to return home. Therefore, I think I would like to work further away.' My mother was not at all happy with this idea but my stepfather helped me obtain an

apprenticeship with Mr Hanai, a tailor in Toyohashi, some forty miles east of Nagoya.

The day for an apprentice started at six o'clock in the morning. My first job was to clean the premises and to sew cloths together with which to clean the floor. I had to work continuously until 11.30 at night. I was fifteen years old then, and at first felt sleepy all the time. My breakfast consisted of only a cup of miso (soya bean paste) soup, a few pieces of pickled radish, and two bowls of boiled rice and barley. Before asking for the third bowl I had to examine the demeanour of the other people and to act discreetly. Life as an apprentice was so hard, especially for teenagers with vigorous appetites, that almost half of my peers who had started at the same time as me, failed to complete the course. I stayed on with a determination that I should not give up and return home. In the third year of my apprenticeship, when I was seventeen, I volunteered to collect orders. In order to become established as a tailor, I thought, manual skills as a tailor would not be enough. Negotiation and sales skills were also essential for a successful business. In fact, Master Hanai did not act as a tailor by himself. He directed the business, leaving the manufacturing to his skilled employees. 'Fine,' said Master Hanai to my proposal, 'you can compete with me for sales.'

Master Hanai specialized in military uniforms, because the economy of Toyohashi City was thoroughly dependent on the army Division stationed there. I tried to obtain as many orders as possible by behaving in the following way: when I took orders for winter clothing, I also took orders for summer clothing as a set by offering some discount. For those people who were going to be demobilized, I offered five per cent discount if they ordered cotton clothes section by section, each section consisting of ten to twelve people.<sup>1</sup>

In 1935, I turned twenty and had my military physical examination. Fortunately, I was classified as Grade B-1, which meant that I was not enlisted for immediate service. 'If you do not need to join the army', Master Hanai said, 'please stay with us for another year. I will pay you one hundred yen as a premium, and twenty yen per month as a salary.' Working under contract with the master after the completion of apprenticeship was a custom of the time. I had been paid two hundred yen for the entire six years of my apprenticeship.

Therefore, the offer was not too bad. Also, as the local Toyohashi Division had been sent to Manchuria by that time, the master was planning to establish a branch in Korea. His business was therefore at a turning point and expanding. I decided to help the master by working with him under contract.

I could have stayed with Master Hanai even longer. However, since I was a small boy, I had been mocked and bullied as a fatherless child or, a stepson, etc. 'I shall become more important', I said to myself, 'than those who abuse me, and show them what I am able to do. I shall never give up.'

At the beginning of 1937, at the age of twenty-one, after I had completed my contract, I went home to Sennonji to set up a tailor's shop there. My primary target customers were the serving officers and soldiers of the Division stationed in Nagoya. My stepfather and mother promised to look after my subsistence so that I could concentrate on establishing a business as soon as possible. Thanks to Mr Shigenobu Yokoi from the head family, as well as to Master Hanai who kindly introduced me to the Division people, there was a smooth transition from the master to the pupil in securing orders from the Division. Thus, from February 1937 onwards, I was able to devote myself entirely to the business.

However, on 1 May 1938, I received a 'red paper' calling me up for military service for the first time. I was twenty-three years old. Whether I liked it or not, I was thrust into the army on 5 May that year. I was attached to a reserve unit of the 3rd Transport Regiment, Nagoya, as a private second class. After two months, I was upgraded to a private first class. This did not mean, however, that I was an accomplished soldier. The reasons were that the Sino-Japanese War had broken out the year before around the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking (Beijing) on 7 July 1937; that a porter needed to be in the rank of a private first class or above; and that there were not enough privates first class.

In September 1938, we departed from Port Ujina, Hiroshima, and landed in Taku (Dagu) near Tientsin (Tianjin) in Northern China. We were to augment the Second Company of the Transport Service of the 1st Field Artillery Brigade consisting mainly of the Division from Nagoya. When we reached Peking, the company had

already departed for Chi-nan (Ji-nan). We hastened after it all the way across the Shantung (Shandong) peninsula up to Tsingtao (Qingdao) where we finally caught up with the Company. We then sailed to Canton (Guangdong) Province and landed from Bias Bay in the east of Hong Kong. We were stationed in the premises of a girls' school which was turned into a field provisions depot. At that time, the Japanese Army was overwhelming the Chinese and there was little risk to life even in active service. I returned to Japan in February 1939, was demobilized in March and went home.

As soon as I was back home, I struggled to re-establish my business which had been shut for ten months. However, most of the Division in Nagoya had been sent to China and there were few familiar faces remaining there. It quickly became clear that my business would fail if I continued to specialize in military uniforms. Therefore, I re-opened my shop as a general tailor. This time, I handled mainly the kind of clothing which was to be worn on the way to the barracks after being called up, as well as school uniforms and uniforms for civil servants. Clothing began to be rationed then, and it had become difficult to obtain cloth. On the other hand, there was an increasing number of customers who wanted to place their orders, while they were still able to. The prospects for my business looked good and I devoted myself to making it a success. There was talk of marriage. But then I was confronted by the arrival of a 'red paper', once again. That was on 5 August 1941. I was twenty-six years old.

Six weeks earlier, on 22 June, Germany had invaded the Soviet Union. The red paper, this time, specifically ordered me to return to the barracks as discreetly as possible for reasons of intelligence security: no celebratory goodbyes; dress casually; hide your kitbag beneath another holdall. I walked to the barracks as if I were proceeding casually to the public baths. I stayed there for about twenty-five days, and underwent drill every day.

Almost every day, late in the afternoon, I saw my mother and stepfather standing on the roadside while we were on our way back to the barracks from drill. I have no idea how they realized that I had been called up for military service again. My mother discreetly gave me about a dozen small pieces of sushi wrapped in bamboo

sheaths. My stepfather, too, appeared utterly disappointed, presumably because he wanted me to marry, maintain his lineage and look after him after his retirement. He often stopped his cart and just gawped at me helplessly from a corner of the drill ground. I believe that he and my mother were praying for my safe return, even though they were unable to help because I was removed from their grasp and became instead a property of the state.

They came to see me also on the day of the final family reunion before our departure for the front. We parted suppressing and hiding our tears. This turned out to be the last occasion in my life when I saw my mother and stepfather.

Late at night, my unit was secretly transported in a goods train from Nagoya to Osaka to sail overseas. We landed in Talien (Dalian), and were assigned to the 29th Transport Regiment in Liaoyang, Mukden Province, 'Manchuria'. There, I was put on guard duty as a private superior, and later as a lance corporal.

[It was already autumn, to be followed by a long freezing Manchurian winter. It appeared that it was rather too late to invade the Soviet Union. At that time, nobody imagined that Japan was going to fight the United States in the coming winter.]<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

# TO WHERE ARE WE GOING TO BE POSTED? (FEBRUARY – MARCH 1944)



On 8 February 1944 at around 21.00 hours, I finished my duty which was to oversee the mass bathing of soldiers (fourteen to fifteen hundred soldiers bathed between 16.00 and 21.00 hours in a tiny space so that someone was required to watch lest any theft or any act of indecency occurred) and returned to my barracks to find my colleagues more agitated than usual. ‘Squad Leader’, my subordinates told me as soon as they caught sight of me, ‘Lieutenant Inaba is calling you. It seems, Squad Leader, that we are organized for an operation in northern Manchuria.’ An operation in northern Manchuria suggested a war with the Soviet Union.

‘OK’, I was excited and went to see Lieutenant Inaba.

He produced a piece of paper without uttering a word. It was a document for the formation of a company.

‘Yokoi’, the lieutenant said, ‘you shall take the field in my platoon as the chief of the second section.<sup>1</sup> We must be discreet, but we are going to the south.’

I examined the list.

‘Sir’, I said, ‘may I ask if this is final? I would like to bring some soldiers from my own section whom I know well, if this is at all permissible.’

‘Yokoi’, the lieutenant said with a grimace of mild pain, ‘I know what you want to do. But please understand my position. If I allow

you to take your favourites, what would happen to the rest? Yokoi, I think you understand the issue.'

'Yes, I am sorry for having troubled you, Sir.'

Thereupon, I hastened back to my room. From 22.00 hours onwards, I was subsumed by the mountains of weapons, clothing, provisions, salaries, etc. received, and by checking equipment. When I finished this preparation for a winter operation, it was already 08.00 hours on the morning of 9 February. I completed checking military equipment by 08.30 hours and left the barracks where we had been settled for such a long time. Getting on a convoy of lorries, we headed for the base of the 38th Infantry Regiment. On arrival, the soldiers of the Infantry Regiment were unable to comprehend why on earth we, transport servicemen, had suddenly to join the infantry. Some of them were bewildered. Some of them were so agitated that they did not attempt to hide their dangerously threatening disdain and loathing.

We stayed there for ten days. There was heated debate about what was going to happen. 'We are sent to the north (to fight the Soviets)!' 'No, we are being sent to the south (to fight the Americans)!' Although we were in military service, we heard absolutely nothing about our defeats on Attu in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, or on Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands near the equator. We had never heard of these islands nor had we any idea how overstretched our front was!<sup>2</sup> Nor were we informed of the retreat on the German fronts. Still, somewhat strangely, all of us sensed that Japan was losing ground to its enemies.

On the morning of 20 February 1944, a departure ceremony under the command of Colonel Jōtarō Suenaga took place. That evening, 3,000 of us were packed and crammed into a goods train and left Liaoyang without knowing where we were going. Our train crossed the Manchu-Korean border on the 21st, and arrived in Pusan (Busan) in southernmost Korea on the morning of the 22nd.

There, we were provided with new summer uniforms. 'We are being sent to the south!' Invariably, we imagined what our destination looked like and pondered about a dark destiny awaiting us there. At the same time, we had not yet abandoned a glimpse of

hope that we might be repatriated. We stayed in Pusan for about three days. That was because ships were experiencing difficulties coming over from Japan, presumably because the Korean Channel was already filled with US submarines.

The streets of Pusan were empty and cold. Goods were in shorter supply than in Liaoyang. Prices were so high that I was unable to buy any of the things which I wanted. I searched around for sweets to prepare for a long voyage. But regrettably, only cigarettes were available.

Eventually, three ships hove into view in the port of Pusan – the *Akimaru*, the *Higashiyamamaru* and the *Sakitomaru*. Our Supplement Company loaded cargoes on board continuously for two days and two nights without a break. We were soaked with sweat despite the chilling cold of the Korean winter. We loaded so many goods on board that crews were amazed and said, ‘The ships are so bloody full of weapons, ammunition, and various provisions that there is no space for humans!’ And we had still more than a half of the vehicles to be loaded on board, requiring another convoy of ships.

We embarked on the redoubtable *Akimaru* displacing more than 10,000 tons, which was one of the most luxurious semi-cargo cruisers in Japan at that time, usually serving the European route. Requisitioned for military transport purposes, however, the ship was remodelled into something akin to a slave ship in which we were packed tightly like cattle right up to the doors. Because it was dark at night, we were unable to see which route the ship had taken. We simply imagined whenever a few electric lights were seen that we were passing near a port. In the end, we sailed away from Japan without being allowed to disembark. There appeared to be air cover and an escort destroyer for a few days after the departure.

Each deck was so full of cargo that there was little space to stand. The second floor of the hold was further divided into two floors of hatches into which we were squeezed. Some of us slept on weapons lorries. To make matters worse, it was a season of rough seas, and most of us suffered from seasickness. We hardly had appetites to eat anything although food was served three times a day. Since there was such limited space to cook properly for so many people, the

food distribution was always inadequate: a cup of poorly cooked distasteful miso (soya bean paste) soup for breakfast and tiny fragments of meat for lunch. We had simply to swallow them.

Under normal circumstances, we could hoist a canvas to ventilate the air inside the ship. However, we were unable to do so because the ships were disguised as cargo ships as a precautionary measure against enemy submarines. People were treated like cargo. The heat, humidity, foul breath and odour which filled the ship was more than enough to make everyone on board sick. Our faint hope to be regrouped in Japan had evaporated. As we approached Taiwan, we were given tropical uniforms, as distinct from summer uniforms. 'We are definitely being sent to the south', we thought. 'Probably as a garrison on an island. But which island?' We were kept in the dark about wherever we were going.

After a few days, the destroyer which had escorted us had turned back and headed north. Deserted in the middle of nowhere, our voyage remained peaceful for another four days. On the fifth day, at sunset, all of a sudden, warning alarms sounded ominously. 'Ong! Ong! Ong! Ong!' Alerted, we made ourselves ready for the next order. The ship heeled over a bit. Ever vigilant, we waited for ages and ages for a further order. 'Is this ship going to explode or sink?' 'Are we going to die?' After breathtaking minutes of despair and cold perspiration, there was an announcement:

We were attacked by enemy submarines. The captain managed to escape from the first torpedo. The second torpedo hit the bottom of the ship. Please be assured as there is no hindrance to navigation. We are proceeding at a decreased speed.

We were relieved and shared delight with tears for our luck and safety.

After the alarm was switched off, I went down to the bottom of the ship to see what had happened. There were about a dozen victims. Some of them had an arm or leg or both blown off; fragments of flesh were scattered everywhere. It was a terrible sight which I could hardly see. 'A hell on earth', I thought. 'May their souls rest in peace', I shut my eyes and prayed quietly.

‘In case of emergency’, so we had been instructed at that time, ‘gather on the top deck with weapons, ammunition, portable provisions and follow the orders of your superior.’ In reality, there were not enough lifejackets on board. Instead, there were some square floating boards and some green bamboos each some ten feet (three metres) long.

Some seamen were also on board with us. Each of them was provided with a pack of dried cuttlefish, a piece of smoked and dried bonito (fish), a bottle of whisky, a rope of some ten feet (three metres) long, and so on. Whisky was there to prevent limbs from becoming numb while adrift on the sea. Dried cuttlefish and bonito did not absorb salt even when these were put into the seawater. These were also highly calorific. The rope was there to bind a seaman’s body to any floating object, because limbs became numb and unable to hold anything if the body was immersed in the sea water for a long period of time.

The Navy was thus organized very reasonably, based on their own experience. By contrast, the Army provided us with some hard biscuits and canned food. Once soaked in seawater, biscuits are inedible. How can we open a can of food while we are adrift on the sea? ‘When the ship sinks’, one of the petty officers on board told me, ‘throw away your rifle and bayonet; take a bar of green bamboo and jump into the sea with it; once in the sea, swim away as fast as and as far as you can from the ship; otherwise, you will be swallowed up into a whirlpool created by the sinking ship; while there is life, there is hope’, he continued, ‘a rifle can be manufactured very quickly, but it takes twenty years to bring up a human being.’

I think this is absolutely right. It is ridiculous faithfully to follow instruction merely to become the prey of a shark. Whatever the instruction or manual might say, I thought, I have to judge things on my own and look after my own life. Japan was said to be protected by gods – as manifested in the gales which swept away the Mongolian invaders twice in the thirteenth century. ‘But’, I thought, ‘Japan is not a unique country in this respect. Other nations have their own god(s). Therefore, this war is a contest of power between Japanese gods and foreign god(s). However strong the Japanese

gods might be, there will be some mistakes. I cannot fend off arrows and bullets by relying on the power of gods.'

The *Sakitomaru* was sunk by enemy torpedoes. 'The captain of the *Sakitomaru* remained on board alone', it was said, 'when it was wrapped in flames and went down into the sea.' 'Its survivors were', it was alleged, 'rescued by friendly patrol boats and destroyers which came over to give support. They were taken to Saipan.' The *Akimaru*, which we were on, was heeling and struggling to proceed by decreasing the speed from twelve or thirteen knots to five knots. The *Higashiyamaru* was still accompanying us. Because of the inadequate and disgusting food, the degree of bodily exhaustion was intensified. Everyone was losing strength.

At times, I went up on the deck and watched our seamen training for action at sea. They did not seem to know such basics as measuring the angle of a cannon, so and so degree to the south, distance so and so metres to the target. Obviously they were hastily recruited amateurs without proper training. I felt terribly insecure.

Back below deck, some soldiers were slicing onions into the cups of soup of their superiors, presumably trying to bribe them. In all probability, they had stolen the onions from the kitchen. I had served longer than they had as a soldier, but I was thoroughly out-classed by their skills and their arts of enticement and bribery. I was shocked to realize the degree to which our standards as professionals, our morale and discipline had deteriorated. At the same time, I thought, apart from those officers in active service, there could not be a single soldier who had volunteered. They had become weary of this long war. Our ship had a half of its body paralysed. Nevertheless, there was no air cover which ought to be in place, nor had any escort warship come into view. There was a growing sense of insecurity.

I sank down and laid out on a floor in the hold. When I closed my eyes, a variety of thoughts came into my mind. 'We are recklessly proceeding towards the south in this damaged ship. If this is hit by another torpedo, the same fate as that of the *Sakitomaru* will befall us. Are there no more aircraft left in Japan? Is there no warship left in Japan? Are we already abandoned? No! This must not be

*To Where Are We Going To Be Posted? (February–March 1944)*

true. Must not be! Probably, they are having difficulties communicating . . . ?

In the meantime, on 4 March 1944, I saw our ship slowly entering a certain port.

‘Is this our destination? Where on earth are we?’

After a long, troubled voyage to an unknown destination, we were thoroughly exhausted. Since we were unable to have adequate food on board, we were unsteady on our feet. We were as frail as ill patients. Somehow, we managed to land on the shore and found some Japanese civilians who had been there for some time. We asked them, ‘Where are we?’

For the first time ever, we were told that we were on Guam in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

## CHAPTER 3

# ‘DEPLOYMENT’ IN GUAM (MARCH – JULY 1944)



After having just about survived the wretched voyage, Guam appeared to me a fantastically beautiful island. This Micronesian island was first colonized by Spain (Magellan, the Portuguese navigator, sailing for the king of Spain, landed in 1521), and then by the United States in 1898. On 8 December 1941, a few hours after their attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, the Japanese invaded the island and faced little resistance. During the early few years of the war, the island was located far away from the battlefield, and only a few small inactive garrisons were stationed there. Towards the end of 1943, however, the Mariana Islands including Guam and Saipan in the north, were deemed significant strategic bases for the United States to carry out their final air assault on mainland Japan. The Japanese, for their part, tried to fortify them in great haste as bastions of their homeland security. I have now learnt that I had been appointed to be a part of this effort.<sup>1</sup>

We entered a port called Piti, north of the Apra Harbor on the central west coast of the island. Some local natives helped us unload the ships. The first order which we received was, ‘Watch out for air strikes at all times!’

I supervised the unloading, I was surprised to see that some of the cartons among every load of cargo brought down by a derrick, were damaged. Some food cans were missing from their boxes. There was often a hole in a straw bag of rice and our precious rice spilt out like waterfall as we unloaded these bags. These apparent

thefts were indicators of the low, deteriorating morale of hungry Japanese soldiers.

We spent the first night on the island at Police Inspector Tachibana's lodging in Piti which also served as a police sub-station. The spacious premises with a large house and a large garden were reportedly requisitioned from a local person. Apart from the senior officers who stayed inside, we camped out in the garden at the foot of what appeared to be a betel palm tree about 33 feet (10 metres) tall. As we were suddenly transported from freezing Manchuria where the temperature was minus 20 degrees Celsius (subzero Fahrenheit), to this tropical island near the equator, our bodies were unable to adjust to the heat. As soon as we lay down, we sank into a deep sleep.

Next morning, some soldiers brought in some pale pumpkins which they had found somewhere. Likewise, we were unable to resist taking coconuts. All of us were desperately hungry for something fresh and untinned. In any event, we wanted to taste coconuts and drink their milk for the first time out of sheer curiosity. However, the palm trees were as tall as a telegraph pole. There were only thin footholds carved into the stems by natives. From among my section, those who were young and confident at tree climbing came forward and smoothly climbed up the trees and dropped fifteen to sixteen coconuts for us. Still, at first, we had no idea how to eat them. We asked an employee of a local Japanese company for help. We borrowed a local tribal machete, cut aslant a coconut's lower green part, and split the hard shell of the kernel (*copra*) by inserting a blade and knocking it. I put my mouth to the crack, and poured the coconut milk into my mouth. It tasted like a soda pop which had gone flat.

We stayed in Piti for three days. After the unloading, our company walked to the east, and were put on guard duty along the coast east of Agana. In general, the north and the east coasts of the island were cliffs. The west coast, including Agana, was surrounded by coral reefs spreading outwards some 1.2 miles (2 km) from the shore. Then, the sea bed sinks steeply into the world's deepest ocean trench. Consequently, the number of accessible harbours was limited. Also sharks were so frequently seen in the area that swimming was not permitted except at specific locations.

We arrived in Agana and were surprised to find that there was absolutely nothing which even looked like a citadel or a defensive position; only palm trees were to be seen here and there along a beautiful white beach. In fact, the geophysical reality of the area was not at all good for constructing any kind of substantial defence installation. 'If the enemy invades here', I thought, 'we will be doomed.' However, we had no choice, because we were ordered to guard the area. We pitched some tents on the beach and stayed there for about a week, frequently invaded by the rising tide at night. Shellfish in Guam tasted horrible. But there was nothing much else to do, and we were able to relax for a long while and recover our physical and mental strength a bit.

We discovered some natives tanning the skins of a water buffalo. I found their work rather interesting, and observed their work processes. They chopped the bark of a tree containing tannin into small fragments, and soaked the fragments in water to produce lye (alkaline solution). They then soaked a piece of skin in the lye for a few days. They shaved the hair, and scoured off the dirt from the back of the skin, with a tribal machete. After having cleansed the skin, they soaked it in the tannic lye again for about a month. When the leather became supple and soft, they took it out of the lye, stretched it, nailed its corners to a frame and finally dried it under the sun. This process might appear rather primitive, but it turned out to be very useful knowledge for my life in Guam later on.

Hiroyuki Fukaya got on well with me, partly because he came from Hamamatsu, which was near my village. He asked the locals to make him a leather belt. They exchanged it for a packet of cigarettes. (He was upgraded to Corporal after his death.)

We also learnt from the natives that we could eat a reddish fruit which was called a 'lemonchina'<sup>2</sup> (lime). Its shape was a bit like that of a kumquat. I learnt that these lime trees were very hard. I was also given a papaya for the first time. It tasted bitter and smelt unripe. Even so, both coconuts and papayas became hard to find soon after our arrival.

Indeed, we were always so hungry that we habitually burgled our company's provisions depot at night. There were porters watching the depot. But because the porters themselves committed theft,

they pretended not to see if the others did the same. Of course, when we burgled our depot, we did not do it individually, but mobilized our entire platoon or at least one of our sections to do so.

In the meantime, our company moved to Sinajana located up the hills to the southeast of Agana. We seized some houses from the natives for our own use. At that time their houses were very basic. We climbed up a ladder onto the wooden floor of a house on high pillars. There was only a single room under a thatched roof and it was furnished with a number of wooden beds. Unlike the Japanese, the natives here kept their shoes on inside the house so that the floor was filthy. There was no supply of electricity, gas or water. There was a palm oil lamp, or an empty can used as a lamp. It emitted a disgusting and offensive smell. The roof was thatched with palm leaves. At night, we were able to see stars here and there through the thatch. However, the roof slope was so steep that no rain actually leaked through the thatch. Since the village chief was a second-generation Japanese on the island, Mr Okahisa, the requisitions went smoothly.

The natives on the island were called 'Chamorros'. I learned that the Spaniards killed all the males and spared the females. The Spaniards then brought in some males from the Philippines and China to mix with the local women. Thereafter, the Americans, the Germans and the Japanese came over so that there was no longer a single 'pure' Chamorro surviving at that time. Before Japan occupied the island, it had been administered by the US Navy. The young islanders had joined the US armed forces. Since the Japanese were so arrogant and overbearing, I heard that the natives were harbouring a deep-rooted resentment against us, although for the time being they were carefully discreet.

When we were in Sinajana, we were ordered to fend for ourselves in food gathering. Accordingly, we cultivated the requisitioned land and sowed vegetables. We were surprised to find corn sprouting among our vegetables, not already realizing that the natives had sown corn seeds in that place.

At first, the food for the entire company was cooked in the house of the village chief. However, food rations were insufficient. When a section acquired extra food, they tended to cook it secretly in

order to consume it among themselves. Then, at the company commander's discretion each section was allowed to cook on its own. Since we were in the supply service, we were in control of the provisions. 'What a wonderful place!', some of us were unable to suppress our delight. At that time, a minimum decent level of life was still maintained. For example, there was a navy hospital on the island. It was the only one, but there was one anyway.

However, towards the end of March 1944, the situation on Guam suddenly deteriorated. Some of the Japanese women and children were taken back to Japan. (Those who were unable to return were forced into military employment.) In April, transport ships began to bring in anti-aircraft guns, tanks and vehicles. It was a busy time unloading these from the ships. The result was that more than 20,000 troops of all ranks were positioned on the island within the space of two months. Transport ships carrying food provisions for three years also safely arrived in the port.

While unloading these provisions with fifteen subordinates of mine, I was shocked to realize that the rice which was brought to us was brown rice still with its chaff, harvested in Japan back in 1943. I felt helpless and wondered whether the deprivation back in Japan was so severe as to deny the winnowing of rice . . .

The tide of war gradually turned more tense. From Piti, we went southwards along the coast and concentrated on building a defensive position in the centre of Agat to try and check the enemy invasion. The beach south of Agat was later renamed the 'Invasion Beach' by the United States. There was a man-made water source on a mountain called 'Alifan' behind Agat. Our company encamped along a river flowing from it. We dug trenches and reclaimed farmland from the jungle. There was of course no immediate food production. Guam's soil was as hard as solidified cement. It was so hard that our pickaxes bounced back off it. We were unable to dig sufficiently deep trenches. The blazing sun made our labours particularly hard to bear. When we were in Manchuria, the work was light and the food sufficient, although there was little rice. Here, there was so much labour with so little food. Everyone suffered from severe hunger.

Because of the season, we were prohibited from taking bread-

fruits, cycad nuts (*federico*<sup>3</sup>), bananas and papayas because these were the islanders' staple food. Thus, we had to climb up palm trees after a day of excruciating labour to obtain some coconuts, just to fill our stomachs.

At the roll-call late one afternoon, somebody told us that there was a huge lizard on a palm tree. My section besieged the tree. When we hit the lizard with a bamboo stick from below, it climbed further up the tree. The lizard was about four feet or more long (1 m 20 cm – 1 m 30 cm) and well developed. In the meantime, a non-commissioned officer calling the roll heard our clamour and shouted aloud, 'Where has the Yokoi Section gone?' Well, we were simply too busy engaging the lizard to go back to the roll-call or to report what was going on. Nevertheless, some people seemed to have reported that the Yokoi Section was struggling with a big lizard. To my amazement, not only our Platoon Commander Inaba, but also members of other sections abandoned the roll-call and came over to help us.

I could think of no good way of capturing the lizard alive. We threw stones at it from below and let a soldier climb up the tree to try and get it, but to no avail. Meanwhile, it was getting darker. 'As it is already dark, if we swing the tree to bring him down', I thought, he might run away. It has a large mouth and might bite someone.' Then I remembered a circus that I saw in my childhood. An aerial acrobat performer who fell from the rope, fell down on a large net. 'If we set a net under the tree and climb up the neighbouring palm trees to chase him', I thought, 'he cannot escape from one tree to another.' We gathered mosquito nets from each section and stretched them under the tree. This idea worked successfully, and we captured him alive. 'Since he was captured by all of us', Company Commander Tsuchiya ordered, 'distribute the meat among all of us!' The lizard was taken to the company's cookery, and was kept there for a while. In the end, I heard, a tiny morsel of the meat was distributed to everyone.

As far as I was concerned, I had been sent away in the meantime with Corporal Fukaya's first section to build the third airfield. I was assigned to lead the third section of the second platoon of the construction corps led by Lieutenant Takeda and sent to Finegayan

on the north-east of the island. Regrettably, therefore, I was unable to taste the fruit of our intensive labour.

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From towards the end of May 1944, US air strikes began. Our navy had two airfields on the island. But in order to intercept the enemy aircraft, we needed more airfields. I heard later that our task was to construct an air base to accommodate 300 Japanese fighters and bombers under the command of Lieutenant-General Yahata from Japan. This was why the air base construction was so urgent. The 300 aircraft had actually left Japan, I was told, but had been intercepted by some seven hundred US fighters on their way to Iwo Jima, a half-way point between Tokyo and Guam. In the end, none of our aircraft reached Guam.

In fact, our construction of the air base was not completed, either. This was because we had only some small shovels, portable pickaxes, a few saws and hatchets. With these, we had to clear the jungle and level the ground, although sappers cleared rocks with dynamite. Our four tanks dragged away palm trees which we felled – arguably another indicator of our ‘primitive’ method as this was an elephant’s job. We carried away pieces of rock blasted by our sappers on foot in rope baskets into the jungle. These baskets were woven from the fibres of *pago*<sup>4</sup> (hibiscus tree) from which I later wove my clothing. In total, about 200 people participated in the construction of the air base under the blazing sun with very poor quality food. Soon, US air strikes became increasingly frequent, indeed, almost once every day, and we more often hid ourselves away in tiny shelters than did any work.

When our sappers set dynamite, Lieutenant Todoroki who commanded them ordered us to take shelter and counted the number of explosions. Normally, they set ten dynamite sticks. ‘Come on!’ the lieutenant often shouted, ‘what has happened to the tenth? Do not move yet, as there is still one to go.’ After a while, a non-commissioned officer approached the lieutenant and whispered something to him. Thereupon, the lieutenant signalled us to come out and resume work. What happened was that our sappers often pilfered one of the ten sticks. The reason was food. They took it

down to the sea, put it in a bottle and ignited the fuse then threw it into the sea in the hope of killing some fish to eat. Indeed, often a huge sound of an explosive, 'Boom!' was carried to us from the sea on the night air as we slept under tents in a patch of jungle. Our superiors seemed to have turned blind eyes to this pilfering.

I suffered from a severe stomach-ache during the construction work, and was allowed to return to Agat. There, I was diagnosed with ascariasis<sup>5</sup> and prescribed a purgative. This resulted in severe diarrhoea. I was given leave to rest on a farm in Fena at the foot of Mt Alifan behind Agat.

During a break in the US air strikes, our navy's bombers took off on an assault mission. Later, twenty-five or -six of our bombers returned from the raid in formation and tried to make a landing circling once in the air. All of a sudden, a group of black objects like sparrows descended from the clouds and shot down almost all of them into the sea in full view of us. They were American fighters. 'They flew after ours from a higher altitude', someone said, 'ours had already not only run out of bullets but also fuel, and were simply unable to fight.' I agreed. In this battle, our Japanese aircraft were virtually annihilated. Only five or six aircraft survived. These remaining aircraft shot up star bombs at night and did some flight training. 'They are trying to whip up our morale', someone said. However, I had no idea whether or not it had any beneficial effect. At that time, we called our Japanese aircraft 'matchboxes' or 'gasoline tanks' because they were of such poor quality that they easily caught fire and crashed.

From time to time, from the top of Mt Alifan, I had an unhindered view of air battles. On the whole, our Japanese aircraft were fighting quite courageously, shooting down many enemies. However, whenever American aircraft were shot down, the pilots jumped out with parachutes. Soon, their submarines emerged on the surface and picked them up. Presumably, there were lots of American submarines operating near Guam. By contrast, when a Japanese aircraft went down, nobody went to help the pilot. It was hopeless.

I also heard in this period that some locals were making contact with enemy submarines at night by way of torchlight and signals. In one incident, I was told, some locals sang the US anthem and waved

handkerchiefs to a submarine. Not only them but also the entire population of islanders was interned in one place thereafter. I think it was already July 1944. By that time, there were no longer any Japanese aircraft taking off from Guam.

I think that Japan's war plans were utterly reckless or too ignorant of the power of their opponent. For example, our tanks hid themselves behind *gramineae*<sup>6</sup> (foxtail grass), which grew tall in Guam. However, local foxtail grass grew straight so that tanks were perfectly visible from the sky. Even small children could grasp this simple fact. Just as I feared, as soon as the US aircraft caught sight of these tanks, they poured down loads of incendiary bombs. As the foxtail grasses caught fire, the fire spread across the entire mountain destroying all the tanks. In addition, our Artillery Corps had kindly stored their ammunition there for the same reason that the tanks were there. As the whole mountain was wrapped in flames, the ammunition, tear-gas bombs (which we called by a code-name 'Agent Red') and other gas bombs also exploded, spreading fragments of bombs and pockets of gas, thus endangering our lives even though we were located in trenches. I do not know how many times I thought that I was finished.

Also, on the roadside between Agat and Fena, there was a fake anti-aircraft gun position. The Japanese followed the tactics of an archaic fourteenth-century battle, making the number of defending troops appear larger than they were. They erected palm trees pointing towards the sky like anti-aircraft guns, and placed straw dolls surrounding them dressed like soldiers. Our enemies did not bother about such childish disguise as the reality was clearly visible from the air. Is there any explanation for this stupidity other than that the Japanese officers were suffering from a retarded or arrested development of imagination? Or did they simply underestimate the power of the United States?

Our officers tried to impress emphatically upon us the necessity of 'defence' and 'interception' repeatedly. Nevertheless, there was not even a single fortress gun on the coast between Agat and Agana, the locations of the subsequent US invasion. The coast remained entirely defenceless.

On 5 June 1944, the Americans began their invasion of Saipan.

We were informed of it, at least. Some of us were ordered to go there to help in the defence of the island, which was to become a major base for the US bombardment of mainland Japan. Sergeant Adachi led six or seven amphibious boats and departed from Fauhiguayak<sup>8</sup> on the northernmost end of the island. They were, it was said, unable to reach Saipan. They tried to return to Guam from around Rota (halfway between Saipan and Guam), and were simply sunk en route. Only one boat returned, thanks to the sea current, it was said, which miraculously brought it back to Guam.

I think it was at that time that seven American soldiers were, reportedly, camping among the foxtail grasses and bushes near Pago on the central west coast of the island. They began to fight each other over food and were detected by the Japanese. Allegedly, six of them were caught and one, a signal man, ran away.

The enemy air strikes intensified day by day. I was still suffering from diarrhoea. I loathed my diarrhoea. The enemy invasion was imminent. But I was unable to do anything. I felt utterly helpless.

On 10 July 1944, a fleet appeared on the horizon. We were able to see it very clearly. The fleet was lying line ahead along the coast below Mt Alifan, namely Agat Bay, keeping some distance between itself and the coast. It consisted of a dozen warships in a line led by a large cruiser, pointing their cannons towards us. The fleet was at a standstill as if it was glaring at us.

At first, all of us were delighted to see it. 'Our fleet has come to help us!' We had been told that our navy was going to engage in a major battle with the Anglo-American fleet near the Mariana Islands. Therefore, when we realized that it was not one of our squadrons,<sup>9</sup> but the enemy's, we were thoroughly disappointed. 'What is our navy doing?' 'Why don't they come to help us?' The moment of exhilaration quickly turned into anger.

In the meantime, the US fleet unloaded some boats. They took no account of us and sailed around freely. On the coast, we had planted three lines of drums of petrol and three lines of mines alternating with one another for defence. The boats were making reconnaissance surveys of our defence installations and sounded the depth of the sea to prepare for the invasion. We were unable to

do anything but simply watch them. This was because we had no long-range gun which could reach them.

About three days later, they launched a massive naval bombardment accompanied by an aerial bombardment. The top of the mountain where we were stationed was relatively safe although there were occasional stray shots. We just watched the progress of the bombardment. We did not know how many shells and rockets they had fired upon the island. Our drums and mines which we planted with considerable effort were completely wiped out. Even at night, they fired star shells illuminating everywhere almost under full daylight. For about a week, we sustained their bombardment twenty hours a day; they stopped shelling only three times a day for their meals; consequently, we were unable to use any road. Our platoon commander, who returned from the construction of a second airfield in the centre of the island, told me that he was chased by shells fifty metres from behind as he went along a road. He went through the jungle to come back.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, I believe that this incessant bombardment was calculated to make our minds disordered and confused.

It seemed to me that the United States was materially overwhelming, but the Japanese were more skilful. One day, the Americans tried to destroy a transport ship which was moored in a port. Boom! Crash! Boom! Crash! They had to use as many as eighty-seven shells in order to sink it under a clear sky. I counted them from Mt Alifan. If a Japanese warship were to do the same job, ten shots would have been enough.

On 18 July 1944, their naval bombardment further intensified and they densely shelled almost all the area of the island for three days. There was nothing we were able to do except take shelter in trenches. 'How miserable it is to lose the war!' 'We are doomed!' 'Boom! Crash! Boom! Crash! Boom! Crash!' Their bombardment was incessant and their reconnaissance planes flew over in a dominating fashion. They communicated their observations and findings to the fleet which in turn undertook precision shelling at newly found targets. Their firepower was so massive that we feared that the whole island might sink into the ocean.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE US INVASION: 'ATTACK THE AMERICANS AND DIE!'<sup>1</sup> (21 JULY–6 AUGUST 1944)



According to the Japanese official history of the war, we were said to have struck the colours by fire on 21 July 1944 when the Americans invaded Guam.<sup>2</sup> In reality, we did so about a week before that. On that day, our company commander Tsuchiya summoned us to report on the company commanders' meeting with the regiment commander:

The Regiment Commander Colonel Jōtarō Suenaga said that since we stood no chance of winning this battle, the colonel wanted to strike the colours by our own hands before the enemy invasion. We thus struck the colours, which had been handed down to us from our forefathers in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. The colonel said adieu to all of us. Under the circumstances, I want all of you to fight bravely to the last soldier in order to maintain our honour.

'No one shall remain alive to incur the shame of becoming a prisoner of war.' Code 2, Article 8 of the Codes of Conduct in Battle had been so powerfully impressed upon us all.<sup>3</sup>

The intensification of the American bombardment suggested that their invasion was imminent. Even the stabbing pain of my stomach and bodily exhaustion no longer bothered me. I do not

know how to explain this. But I was beginning to be settled into some sort of determination. Not only myself but also all of us shared the same frame of mind. We quietly hid ourselves in a shelter and calmly waited for the invasion.

On the morning of 21 July 1944, at around 04.30 hours, the weather was disgracefully fine and clear. When we came out of the shelter, we saw an increased number of US warships and transport ships drawn up in line of battle. They then launched an intensive naval bombardment along the coastline again. At the same time, about 1,000 US aircraft bombed the coast. While hiding ourselves in the shelter, we had an occasional glance at the sea. Around 07.00 hours, dozens of landing craft came forward one after another. 'They have come!' While we were shouting to each other, our mountain cannons and rapid-firing-guns, which had been hidden in caves beside the shore, opened fire for the first time. However, this turned out to be a trick by the Americans. As soon as we opened fire, their landing craft quickly turned back. They provoked us in order to find out the exact location of our hidden armaments. They then shelled our newly-revealed positions until everything was completely wiped out. The clear sky was darkened by dense powder smoke. We were again confined to our shelters.

Our defence installations along the coast, namely, the six alternating lines of drums of petrol and mines, had been discovered by the Americans before their invasion. The infantrymen of our 38th Regiment strove to defend themselves at the foot of Mt Alifan. However, the US landing troops broke through our lines with great ease, and they were already approaching us on the mountain. It was 10.00 hours when our supply company was ordered to prepare for a battle. However, the US invasion was supported by close air cover. Therefore, we were hardly able to come out of the shelter before evening. We were then ordered to retreat, and so encamped in the jungle on the other side of the mountain. Even after dark, the Americans lit up the night sky with their abundant star bombs, climbed up Mt Alifan, and from its top, where we had had some shelter, they machine-gunned all over the jungle below where we were hiding ourselves.

Presumably, the Americans had unexpectedly encountered a ten-

acious resistance of the Japanese garrisons from Saipan earlier on. Therefore, I think that they tried to minimize their losses in their invasion of Guam and proceeded with great care. In any case, we were overwhelmed by their superior fire-power.

The US assault on Guam which aimed to wipe out the fighting capacity of the Japanese garrisons there was said to be one of the largest in the entire history of the Pacific War. The tonnage of bombs and shells dropped on the island during the three days prior to the invasion was said to have amounted to 1,300 tons; the total number of daily sorties of their carrier-based aircraft amounted to about 1,200. As a result, most of the towns on this once peaceful and beautiful island, which used to be called a 'paradise of the southern ocean', were burnt to the ground. Palm and other trees were also burnt and blown apart. Mountains changed their shape and became almost bare. We, the Japanese, who had been deprived of our heavy fire-power along the coastline before the US invasion, and with no warships and aircraft coming to our support, had to fight the overwhelming land, sea and air power of the United States, with our bare hands.

Sadly, we, the transport servicemen were usually provided only with thirty bullets each. By contrast, each infantryman always carried 180 bullets around his waist, and fifty to a hundred bullets in his haversack. A machine-gunner carried 900 bullets in a rucksack on his back. The bullets were the only things which gave soldiers the sense of security under enemy gunfire. With merely thirty bullets each, we, the transport servicemen, felt terribly insecure.

Near midnight, we were provided with a bag of hard biscuits. 'We shall attack the enemy tonight', ordered our company commander. 'Go down and gather at the man-made water source!' By this, Company Commander Tsuchiya actually meant 'the' man-made water source where we used to be positioned. However, there were unfortunately two water sources on Mt Alifan. Everything was already chaotic. Also, our drill and manoeuvres in Japan and Manchuria turned out to be not particularly useful in a real battle. The order, at least in its transmitted form, was imprecise. To make matters worse, while I was relieving myself in the jungle, with a loose motion, because of the diarrhoea, I became isolated from the

platoon second section. I just followed a procession of soldiers going ahead of me. They led me to a water source which was different from the designated assembly point.

There was neither Platoon Commander Inaba nor anyone from my section. But Warrant Officer Kagawa of the same company, Corporal Fukaya and Corporal Horiba of the first section, and some of the third section people, too, assembled at that wrong water source. 'Is this perhaps the wrong place?' When we got there, each of us had realized our mistake for the first time. Also seen there were Surgeon Iwahori who helped me in Manchuria, Sergeant Jōchi and Corporal Hashimoto. There were about fifty people.

Since there was no time to waste by moving to the correct assembly point, we organized three sections under the command of Warrant Officer Kagawa as the temporary platoon commander. We destroyed our gasmasks and heat-resistant clothes by fire in order to be lightly dressed. Our passwords were 'sea' and 'land'. We had a white bandage on our right leg to make ourselves recognizable. Then, we set out for an overnight assault.

I remember bright moonlight that night. Under the hail of the enemy machine-gun bullets, we had to move forward nearly crawling. Warrant Officer Kagawa led us. A great number of us were wounded on the way, and we had to stab to death those who had sustained grievous wounds to relieve their pain rather than abandoning them in pain. Because of the illumination by star bombs, we had to proceed very carefully. We were transport servicemen who had never been taught or trained to make an overnight assault before. Everything was therefore entirely new for us: 'Do not fire', we were ordered, 'Approach an enemy position stealthily; fight a close hand-to-hand combat; and do not expect to come back alive!'

[The *kamikaze* ('divine wind') operation, i.e. the suicide bombing by manned aircraft, was first planned, organized and then executed in the battle of Leyte in October 1944 to counter the US invasion of the Philippines. Arguably, however, a similar thing was being done on land earlier.]<sup>4</sup>

At some point, a group of tanks joined us to spearhead our advance. When we reached a place where we used to cook our meals, intense enemy gunfire prevented us from moving forward

any further. We just lay flat, face down, trying to sink beneath the surface of the ground. Strangely, my nerves were able to detect all the movement of surrounding objects. Probably that was my instinct. 'Zip . . . zip . . . zip . . .' We were driven half crazy under the hail of live bullets. Under such life and death circumstances, people no longer prayed; nor had they any humane emotion like thinking of their mother or loved ones. Kill or be killed here and now. That was it. It no longer mattered whether or not my stomach was aching, or how thirsty I was. Simply I wanted more bullets. That was it. I did not care whether or not I was able to aim at a target effectively. Simply, I wanted the token certainty that I had bullets; 'I have bullets to fire.' This sense was our only salvation. Those who have gone through the ordeal of being under fire would, I think, understand what I am saying.

In military training, we were repeatedly told never to miss a target. In real battlefields, the most important thing is to fire as many bullets as possible. The Americans simply did this. The Japanese army spent two years training new conscripts. But I think one year would have been enough. We were immersed in a series of lectures about shooting positions, codes of conduct and so on. But under live fire, everyone instinctively assumes a low posture.

'Urgh . . .' I heard someone groaning while I was still lying flat down on the ground. 'Yokoi! I have been shot!' It was the voice of my close friend, Fukaya. When I turned my eyes on him, blood was pouring out of Fukaya's mouth. I wanted to go to him at once. However, 'zip . . . zip . . .' enemy bullets were cutting through palm trees or bouncing off them. It was too dangerous even to raise one's head. 'Yokoi! Do not get up!', someone shouted at me, 'If you raise yourself at all, you will be killed!' I wanted to cry. I do not know why I wanted to cry. I do not know how to describe my emotion in that situation.

A soldier was placed in front of our tanks to direct them 'right' or 'left'. When his voice fell silent for a moment, 'Boom!' a tank had exploded and was engulfed in flames. Five tanks were destroyed one after the other, and two retreated. It was already dawn. When we looked carefully, the enemy position was situated on a hill only about fifty-five yards (50 m) away from us. They had set three

machine-guns at the centre and two on the sides, and were firing at us. Since these machine-guns were fired from such close range, the sound of bullets was different. They were not whistling, but brisk and sharp, 'Zip! Zip!' We had a full view of American soldiers. As soon as the sun rose, they retreated. The reason soon became clear. They simply handed over their job to their aircraft.

We began to move on to the water source where we ought to have assembled in the first place. On our way, we came across bodies of our colleagues here and there in the jungle. The body of Lance Corporal Udaka was a bit like that of a squashed frog. I said 'sorry' in my mind whenever I passed by these corpses. Corporal Matsunaga gave his shoulder to our wounded Fukaya to lean on and went to a cave in Mt Alifan where we used to be positioned.

We are going to join our company first. Please wait here as we will come back to pick you up.

That was all that I was able to say to Fukaya. The cave was shallow, but fortunately opening towards the east, not towards the west coast where the enemy had landed. We had set out, never to see Fukaya again. Nobody had any strength to help the wounded. We walked around the jungle and it was near noon when we finally reached our destination.

'Yokoi! Where on earth have you been?'

'I was participating in an overnight assault.'

'Oh! I see.'

As soon as I reached the company, I had a similar conversation with Platoon Commander Inaba. Apparently, the platoon commander and others did not make any overnight assault: to such an extent, the chain of command had broken down. Indeed, it was unclear whether or not there had been any planning. However, our infantrymen seemed to have launched an attack from the foot of Mt Alifan and reached the coast. This is certain because, while we were fighting, I dimly heard people shouting 'Banzai!' three times in Japanese, suggesting their victory. However, the Americans had

already moved into the mountains at that time; our infantrymen would not have encountered any enemy on the coast. I think that they simply fell prey to the US naval bombardment and air strikes which resumed after sunrise.

Warrant Officer Kagawa who acted as the spearhead in the overnight assault had his abdomen pierced through by a bullet. He managed to reach the water source. 'I am finished', he said, 'Give me a gun.' His batman handed him Captain Tsuchiya's gun. Warrant Officer Kagawa put the gun on his temple and shot himself. He was one year younger than I was. He departed, I think, resolutely and honourably.

On that day, we gathered food from a number of our secret provisions depots in the area. We then simply waited until it became dark. Looking out from the top of a tree, US tanks and lorries were constantly visible using our in-camp road which we constructed by clearing the jungle. They fired machine-guns into the jungle blindly. However, apparently, they did not venture into the jungle to chase us.

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On that night (22–23 July), we attempted an overnight assault again. However, our opponents were highly mobile and well guarded against our attacks. We simply had more of our men killed and wounded and soon became unable to advance any further. When we retreated, we put a man at the top of a tree to check our direction by observing the stars. 'Turn east!' 'Turn west!', he shouted from the top of a tree, but we below often failed to catch his directions. In the end, we were simply going round in circles in the middle of the jungle throughout the night until dawn. In the meantime, a wounded private first class, Rihei Abe, had gone missing. Staff Sergeant Toshirō Ogawa had become a little mad and suddenly refused to come along with us. 'Even if I could survive longer', he said, 'I have no hope for the future. I am going to attack enemy tanks.' He left with a machine-gun and five subordinates. I think they ran into enemy gunfire that night. This episode suggests that the company's authority had already gone and everyone was desperate.

Deep within the jungle, even the moonlight did not reach us. Some sort of phosphorescent insect, glowing like fireflies, was

sticking to mushrooms. I do not know who started this practice, but we rubbed the glowing insects onto each other's backs and proceeded in three lines lest anyone lose his way. From time to time, enemy gunfire flew from behind us like whizzing fireballs.

'Urgh . . .' a man walking in front of me crouched; then the man after me fell with a thud; then the man on my right, too, collapsed. The situation was like that. It may have been my illusion, but as soon as I sensed a bullet coming into view, the man on my left, a private superior, Masateru Shōbu had his chest shot through and collapsed. He was panting painfully for a while. I was unable to help him. Everyone crouched and edged towards him and me.

'Water! Water!' I wanted to give him a spoonful of water to ease his death. But by that time everyone's water bottle was empty. In the middle of the jungle, no water was in sight. Someone produced some liquid medicament and I put it into Shōbu's mouth. His stomach suddenly swelled like that of a pregnant woman and he died calmly without any sign of pain on his face. Platoon Commander Inaba was a Buddhist monk and recited a sutra for him briefly. I gave Shōbu's rifle and bayonet to Lance Corporal Mikio Shichi because he, as a medic, had no weapon.

We then began to walk again. It was already the morning of 23 July. We checked our position by looking from the top of a tree. Although we thought that we had made substantial progress, we were in fact back near the in-camp road again. Thus, we hastened to hide ourselves deeper within the jungle. When the sun was up in the sky, between forty and fifty American soldiers guided by some natives approached us along the in-camp road. They were dragging dozens of black telephone wires. The Japanese Army's telephone wires were yellow, but they had been torn apart by the bombardment. Company Commander Tsuchiya divided us into two groups and sent us crawling forward to attack them. The order was to shoot them from behind after they passed us by. We threw some hand grenades, too. They panicked and ran away without firing back, carrying their wounded colleagues on their back. Ten bodies were left behind.

We thought that they would certainly come back to attack us. Therefore, we turned right and went away from the in-camp road.

After a short while, we saw Mt Lamlam (1,328 ft) nearby. This meant that we had come southwards from Mt Alifan, rather than eastwards towards the Fena farm where I took a rest at the onset of my diarrhoea.

We had no idea what was happening on the whole island. During our first overnight assault on 21–22 July, the 38th Infantry Regiment had ninety per cent of its soldiers killed in action or gone missing. Our supply company at the rear became less than a hundred strong. We had already lost contact with the division headquarters and were isolated in the middle of the jungle.

'In any case, we have to make contact with the division headquarters in Agana', our company commander said, 'and to receive their orders.' We waited until it became dark and set off.

Our enemies were now everywhere. The entire coastline had been lost. We did not even know what had happened to Agana itself. Our consecutive two overnight assaults had confirmed that it was pointless to commit to that again. There was no food. Our provisions had already run out. Most of the palm trees and papayas had been blown apart by the bombardment. Owing to hunger and exhaustion, our steps were unsteady.

We came across the remains of our signal unit's barracks. The barracks had been blown up with only a few burnt tree trunks left standing. Some cigarettes, sweets, bottles of saké, miso and canned food were scattered all over the place. Every one of us grabbed them and devoured them hungrily. Corporal Horiba, who had his leg wounded during our overnight assault, got drunk and began to sing loudly. There was the sound of a tank beginning to operate near us.

'Squad Leader', my subordinates entreated me, 'please put him down. This is for all of us'

I agreed.

'We must not kill any of our people!', Platoon Commander Inaba said, 'I will stop him singing.'

He tried to hold Corporal Horiba under control. However, the corporal became more violent and shouted aloud. We put a gag in his

mouth by force and bound his hands and feet. We were fortunate because the tank did not move any nearer.

Shortly after that we came across the empty house of a native chieftain.

‘Since we are so tired’, our company commander said, ‘we shall rest up here tonight.’

However, two of the platoon commanders disagreed.

‘There is no place to hide ourselves. We will easily fall prey to our enemy.’

‘Then’, our company commander said angrily, ‘each platoon is free to go anywhere they like!’

As a matter of fact, our company commander was drunk.

These episodes suggest that we were no longer organized as an army at that time. The chain of command had collapsed and ranks were not honoured. We had been reduced to bands of hungry men.

A short time before, Company Commander Tsuchiya told us that we were going to Agana to join the division headquarters. However, the west coast was under US control so that the shortest way was denied. It was agreed that we should make a detour to Talofofu on the east coast through Fena, then to Pago and then to Agana. There was the farm in Fena. Some fifty to sixty soldiers under the command of Second Lieutenant Shōzō Ōtsuka were believed to be there, too. The company commander ordered Corporal Kimura to go to the farm at Fena and get a cow for our dinner.

‘We shall go to Fena, too.’ Platoon Commander Inaba led us to Fena leaving the company behind.

The so-called ‘jungles’ in Guam, especially from the west to the south of the island, were not really like those in (Papua) New Guinea which were full of ivy and completely dark inside even during daytime. In reality, some small patches of jungle or dense forests were scattered among open green fields. Under such circumstances, it was not easy to move from one place to another. Sometimes, we had to avoid emerging into open spaces. Sometimes, we had to run across an open space as quickly as possible and jump into

another piece of jungle. Frequently, we had to make a detour. After many hours, we were exhausted and dragged our feet. When at length we finally reached the Fena farm, the Ōtsuka unit which ought to have been there, had already gone with a tank unit to attack the enemy. Only some wounded members had been left behind there. Next door to the farm, there was pasture where we found a great number of dead cows. Their bellies were abnormally swollen. We made sure that no enemy was around and shot one of the surviving cows. After the invasion, the main US forces seemed to have gone to the north of the island leaving a part of a mopping-up unit in this southern area.

The cow which we slaughtered was sliced into chunks and boiled in brine. By the time that all this was completed, Company Commander Tsuchiya and the other company members had also arrived in Fena. Although it was quite a big animal, each of us was limited to only two tiny pieces of beef.

Next morning, four or five ill members of the navy air unit and some twenty sappers under the command of Warrant Officer Yamamoto joined us. They were originally commanded by Lieutenant Todoroki when I took part in the construction of the airbase in Finegayan. However, the lieutenant was still young and less experienced so that he seemed to have lost his authority to Yamamoto in the meantime. No one tried to rectify this breach of rank.

We stayed at this farm for a week. During the daytime, we hid ourselves in the jungle out of the way of the enemy patrols. Perhaps as a result of the massive bombardment and fire which ravaged the island for a long time, there was increased rainfall despite the fact that it was a dry season.<sup>5</sup> I thatched a temporary roof with stalks and leaves of uneatable local potatoes which we called 'stupid potatoes'. Indeed, I was still suffering from severe diarrhoea. Even so, I could not survive without food. Therefore, at night I went to the navy provisions depot nearby, and brought back things which I wanted from there. The depot was built in a cave and held a variety of provisions to sustain the garrisons for three years, so it contained almost everything we needed.

In the meantime, the company commander dispatched Sergeant Itō and two others to the division headquarters. They never came

back. After all, nobody knew for sure where our division headquarters was located. I do not know what happened to the three, whether they lost their way or were killed in action.

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According to the official history of the war,<sup>6</sup> the division headquarters had ordered all the garrisons to assemble on Fonte Hill<sup>7</sup> and on Aoba Hill<sup>8</sup> in the west of Agana and at 24.00 hours on 25 July 1944, they ordered an all-out attack on the enemy to fight to the last soldier without turning their back on the enemy. These orders actually seem to have been carried out. However, it was virtually impossible to make sure that the orders were communicated to all units on the island. Certainly, we never heard of them at all. In fact, 25 July was actually the second day of our stay on the Fena farm.

Early on the morning of that day, Second Lieutenant Yoshimitsu Nagahara, Platoon Commander Inaba and I were sleeping side by side in that order. All of a sudden, 'bang!' a shot had been fired at very close range and Lieutenant Inaba and I woke up with a start. Second Lieutenant Nagahara had his buttocks gouged out and was unable to move. 'The enemy's mopping-up operation!' For the moment, I believed so. However, that was the only shot and nothing followed.

'Or was it a spy's bullet?' A spy would normally leave quietly and report his findings to the main force. But if he had run into us unexpectedly, it seemed to me possible for him to panic, shoot us accidentally and run away.

Platoon Commander Inaba agreed with my second theory. He consulted on the matter with the company commander. The company commander thought it better to attack the enemy before they attacked us. He appointed us to spearhead the attack.

Soon, we came across some fifty US soldiers in front of us, keeping solely to the road. All we had to do was to hide ourselves in the roadside patch of jungle, wait until they passed us by, and open fire from behind. However, we, the transport servicemen, were not used to a fire fight. One of us missed his step and made a noise. Instantaneously, we were subject to their heavy gunfire. Thirteen of

us were shot dead. I gathered our men who had run away and stormed the Americans once more from their flank. They seemed unable to ascertain our strength hidden in the jungle, so they quickly retreated helping those who were wounded and limping.

Of course, although we had caused the enemy to run, we were not exultant even for a moment. Nor were our senior officers back in the farm particularly pleased to hear our achievement. They simply feared a larger-scale reprisal.

'It is extremely dangerous for us to stay here.'

'But where should we go then?'

For a very long time the senior officers remained unable to reach a conclusion. In the end, they decided to stay on the farm and see what happened. Perhaps, because we had launched an offensive, the other side might not come back so soon.

'However, where should we go?'

As one of the officers surmised, we had been driven into a cul-de-sac. We had no place to go. We were soaked by the rain every day. We had a number of wounded colleagues who were unable to move. We had no idea when the Americans were going to attack us. We just waited. These were circumstances too horrible to bear. During the daytime, US aircraft frequently circled over us and attacked whenever a human object came into their sights. There were attacks near the farm. Fortunately, however, the farm was situated halfway up the Fena waterfall<sup>9</sup> in a basin between mountains. Therefore, US aircraft seemed to find it difficult to approach the farm at a low altitude and make an attack.

However, they discovered our navy's provisions depot. During the daytime when we were unable to do anything, their convoy of lorries came over a great number of times and carried away as much as they could from the depot. Indeed, as well as food provisions to sustain the garrisons for three years, there were guns, ammunition, military coupons, and almost everything imaginable.

By that time, the number of our transport servicemen was reduced to seventy or eighty. Even at night, all we were able to do was to bear away a bale of rice borne by two of us, and to carry

some canned food by hand. Everyone was happy so long as his stomach was full for the present. Nobody cared about tomorrow.

On 6 August 1944, Company Commander Tsuchiya told us to go and contact the division headquarters. 'I am going to stay here to look after the wounded and the sick', he said. At that time, about 200 Japanese were staying on the farm, including those who were isolated from their own units. None of the messengers, who had been sent to contact the division headquarters for the second time, ever came back.

Subsequently, the company commander seemed to have thought that it was too risky to stay there any longer.

By that time, Second Lieutenant Nagahara who had been wounded, presumably by a spy, was recovering slowly. He was able to walk although he was still unsteady on his feet.

'I do not want to be a burden to you', he said. 'I regret that I am unable to serve any longer. But I am happy to go to see His Majesty, the Emperor!'

He then fired at his head with his gun. He was still standing after that, and asked us:

'Are there any senior officers around?'

We simply stared at him, overwhelmed by the sheer power of that which we were witnessing.

'The supply company so and so strong, so and so number; at present so and so strong, all present and accounted for!'

The second lieutenant opened his eyes wide and called the roll-call to no one in particular.

'I am happy to go to see your Majesty!'

He said this twice and collapsed.

We silently dug a hole, buried him and prayed. A tragic but solemn death, I thought. Having been born in Kyūshū and educated at the military academy, he seemed to me a genuine Japanese warrior. I still remember the way in which he died.

My section departed with Platoon Commander Inaba. Warrant

Officer Yamamoto and some twenty sappers joined us. The company commander and two or three platoons stayed behind with the wounded and the sick.

As we set out, we went to the navy's provisions depot. We took out food for those who remained behind and as many things as we could carry in our haversacks. We also took some ammunition and then set the depot alight lest the Americans seize it. The bags of sugar were piled up at the entrance. As we set them alight, the fire quickly spread throughout the cave emitting black smoke. 'Burn and burn to a crisp!', I shouted in my mind, 'these are invaluable provisions which our people at home have given us. We must not hand over these to the enemy. Even if we are defeated, we shall not hand over a single grain of rice.'

As I was told later, as soon as black smoke came out of the cave, the Americans hurried to the depot in trucks and sprayed it with water hoses. However, there was loads of sugar containing alcohol at the entrance. The more water they sprayed, the more intensely the fire raged.

As I look back at these things now, the day on which we set out from the farm marked the end of the existence of our supply company. Not only those who had set out with us, but also those who had stayed behind, were to disperse one after another. We did not know about the all-out frontal assault order of the division headquarters on 25 July. Nor did we know of their subsequent defeat. But now, I see that we had set out for nowhere, sadly, to go wandering indefinitely.

## CHAPTER 5

# THE LAST DAYS OF OUR PLATOON (6 AUGUST– SEPTEMBER 1944)



On the night of 6 August 1944, we left the Fena farm for Agana where we believed that our Division Headquarters were situated. We were intending to go there via the east coast of the island and Pago near the central east coast. This was because there was a rumour that the Japanese forces were concentrating in Pago.

In reality, according to the official history of the war, following the all-out attack from Fonte Hill and Aoba Hill on 25 July 1944, the surviving Japanese forces had moved into mountains on the northern part of the island. On 11 August 1944, the Force Commander Obata of the 31st Army committed suicide and the entire island fell under US control.<sup>1</sup> By that time, those Japanese who had been driven into the northernmost part of the island, including women and children who had been unable to return to Japan and were subsequently forcefully employed by the military authorities, had thrown themselves one after another from the top of a cliff into the ocean. Adults could have made up their mind when the circumstances required them to die, even if they did not wish to do so. However, it is too painful to think that they committed suicide with their young children who did not understand anything. What a tragedy it was. Having heard about this episode when I returned to Japan, I feel very sad.

Our departure from Fena was six days before the official end of the Japanese resistance, which I have just described. However, we had no way of knowing about these facts at the time.

When we set out from Fena, I asked Platoon Commander Inaba to take Private First Class Itō with me. The private was otherwise to stay behind in the farm as he had been wounded. But he was a batman of the ill-disciplined drunkard, Corporal Horiba. Because Itō had been suffering so much under the rough hands of Horiba, I pitied Itō.

‘May I please bring him with us, Sir?’ The platoon commander said OK to my request.

However, when we came to a forked road on the way, the private received an order to go back to the Fena farm to make contact with the senior officers remaining there.

‘Look! Make sure to take the correct way.’ I made doubly sure by saying ‘we are going to go straight down *this* road. Are you with me? OK?’

Unfortunately, Itō never came back. Perhaps he went the wrong way in the dark or got lost. This episode, too, was very painful for me.

Since there was no enemy in sight, we walked under the starlight along the 13 feet (4 metres)-wide in-camp road, which we had built before the US invasion. I was still suffering from diarrhoea. Therefore, when I carried a rifle and a haversack on my shoulder and bullets and grenades from my belt, I was unsteady on my feet. I began to walk with a bamboo stick picked up on the way, and felt compelled all the way to keep up with my other colleagues. Each of our sappers carried only a rifle, two haversacks and an overcoat. Above all, strong men had been recruited to be sappers. Therefore, they walked very fast.

‘Pago has been seized by the Americans’, the sappers then informed us, ‘who are now mopping up the surrounding areas.’ We thought it suicidal to go to Pago, and changed our mind to go instead to a village called Talofoto at the mouth of the main stream of the River Talofoto on the east coast. (Who knew at that time that later I was to live near a stream which was a tributary of the River Talofoto?) By that time, an unknown number of our colleagues had already gone missing. Our procession was increasingly elongated. Soon, we ran out of food regretting the destruction of our provisions depot.

That night, we had a few drops of rain before it began to pour. We took refuge in a palm grove 2.5 to 3 miles (4 to 5 kilometres) away from the river. There, we came across several unoccupied local houses and billeted in them overnight. The first thing we did was to start cooking. Those who had rice contributed some portions to each other. However, there was not enough firewood. As I remembered that *pago* (the Guam version of hibiscus) burnt well, I gathered wet branches of *pago* trees and tried to ignite them. They did not catch fire easily. The rice was smoked rather than steamed. We were too hungry to mind whether the rice was undercooked or not. We simply gulped it down. We then sank into a deep sleep before setting any watchman.

On the following day, 7 August 1944, we returned to the river to head down towards its mouth in the east. We saw Japanese army barracks here and there. But all were empty. As we went down further, we came across the former barracks of our medical unit. They had left some provisions, powdered miso (soya bean paste), as well as flea powder, anti-mosquito incense coils and other medicaments. After having picked up what each of us wanted, we began to cook in a cave nearby. As Guam was a volcanic island, there were lots of caves. Suddenly, some Americans on patrol fired warning shots from the other side of the river, apparently detecting our smoke. They were only five or six strong. Our cave was on a hill, so that we had geo-tactical superiority. We therefore decided to fight, and killed all of them with ease.

However, we feared that more Americans would come because of the noise of gunfire. We therefore abandoned our rice and miso soup, which were almost ready to be eaten. Resisting with great pain our almost irresistible desire to eat them, we ran away. This was true. The only option left for us was to escape from enemy detection. We had no option but to run away, if we had no prospect of winning a battle with any enemy we encountered; it did not matter how long or how often we kept escaping and hiding ourselves.

‘Come here!’, signalled our sappers walking ahead of us. There was a wood of small palm trees full of coconuts. So we drank coconut milk, the thing which I used to detest as uncanny and like a flat soda pop, now seemed like nectar. I eagerly ate up its copra

(kernel). A Warrant Officer of our Navy Construction Unit happened to pass nearby. He was armed only with a piece of Japanese sword, and had lots of green coconut kernels in both pockets of his coat. 'I can survive at least a week with these, you see!', he said, 'You surely must come with me to Fena.'

He kindly invited us to Fena by saying that there was a provisions depot of the Navy Air Unit and there were lots of caves. We explained to him the situation in the Fena area and the destruction of the provisions depot. 'We are now on infantry duty', Platoon Commander Inaba said, 'so we have to join the main force and fight.' We then parted with the Warrant Officer.

After dark, we arrived at the village of Talofoto. There, one of my subordinates, Shigeji Shimizu kindly cooked a sort of gruel from tapioca powder or something, and served it to me. I warmly appreciated his kindness, but I noticed some black things floating on the surface. When I looked at them carefully, these black things turned out to be mosquito larvae! I did not feel like eating the gruel. Nor did I actually eat it. Next morning, I went to see the source of the water with which the gruel was cooked. It turned out to be a rain pool in a drum of some kind, densely infested with mosquito larvae. To make matters worse, the drum was surrounded by piles of bodies of both Japanese and American soldiers. A dense black swarm of large bluebottle flies and maggots was devouring them and moving in a disgusting manner. It was too horrible a sight to see.

On that day, we were divided into a number of small groups. Each group gathered foodstuffs, seasonings and other necessary things to cook and eat from among the local private houses which were dotted about nearby. Since the Japanese had interned all the natives, none of these houses was occupied. As soon as we finished our breakfast, we sneaked back deep into the jungle. We planned to go through the jungle to Agana from around Pago again. Although we were in the jungle, it was near the coast, so that we had to be careful throughout the journey.

One day, Corporal Kimura and Private First Class Kawamura, tired of being cautious all the time, cooked their breakfast inside a hut of one of the natives. No sooner had they been spotted by the Americans than they were killed under a volley of gunfire. Both of

them had previously risked their lives honourably in leading our overnight assaults. Also, three soldiers on sentry duty were shot dead while they were indulging themselves by chatting to each other.

By then, from among my own section, Shigeji Shimizu, Tokuo Nagao and Tetsuo Unno had been put on sentry duty and scouting by our platoon commander. I did not know that they had been put on these duties. Because Corporal Kimura and others had been killed that morning, I discussed with the platoon commander what to do, and went back to my section. After a while, the three subordinates of mine came back with a can of sugar and a pig.

‘Where have you been without authorization!?’

I scolded them as soon as I caught sight of them.

‘No, Squad Leader, we had been ordered by the platoon commander.’

‘Oh! I am sorry’, I apologized, ‘I did not know that. I should not have scolded you. Thank you for your service.’

After I was ‘discovered’ decades later, somebody said in a newspaper interview, ‘Mr Yokoi was a gentle squad leader.’ However, I, too, beat my subordinates. But I did not want to torture them nor intimidate them without reason. When I was a new conscript, I was always beaten by older soldiers and I felt extremely resentful. If I repeated the same thing to my subordinates, they would inevitably develop the same resentment against me as I did against my superiors. Therefore, when I beat someone, I always explained the reasons and made sure that they understood them.

While we were waiting for the rain to stop, those who had stayed behind in the Fena farm such as Captain Tsuchiya, Corporal Horiba and the wounded and the sick, finally caught up with us. Therefore, the can of sugar and the pig, which Shimizu and the other subordinates of mine had kindly brought to us, were still not enough to be distributed sufficiently among every one of us.

At that time, about ten infantry men under the command of a Staff Sergeant were also with us. However, they did not seem to find it particularly helpful to be with the sluggish transport servicemen. ‘We are going to attack the Americans who are stationing in a school

in Talofofol', they said. They were excited and left soon after. We never saw them again. Judging from the situation at that time and the frame of mind of these soldiers, I think all of them ran into enemy gunfire and perished. I was yet to ask the names of these ten.

Our mixed party eventually reached the upper reaches of the River Ylig, a halfway point between Talofofol and Pago. Our sappers spent the night on the bank of the river, and we in three caves nearby. Next day, an amazing thing happened. I still cannot forget it. The sappers told us to come and collect beef as they had killed some cows. However, we had had a long tortuous journey since leaving the Fena farm. It was raining, too. Therefore, all of us were too exhausted to stand up and go out, even though beef sounded extremely attractive. We had no energy to move.

'Thank you. I will go.' I volunteered. I was still suffering with diarrhoea. I was as frail as ever. But I thought that I had to obtain some nutrition in order to survive. I took a bucket and went out. As I knew that liver was more nutritious than meat, I asked for the liver first. The beef would turn rotten by the following day, so that the other groups of soldiers hidden nearby were also gathering there to take their shares.

Back in our cave, Private Superior Takeitsu Matsunaga roasted the liver and gave a piece of it to me. I sliced it into pieces and ate one of them. That was it. To my amazement, I had recovered from my diarrhoea, from which I had had suffered so long! I couldn't believe it. It was a real miracle. I had fully recovered from the diarrhoea.

A bucket of beef was normally insufficient to feed a platoon. However, either because they were too exhausted to eat, or because *I* went to take it, there were more leftovers than expected. People seemed to have little appetite under such life and death circumstances. It was sad to see the leftovers.

Fortunately, someone discovered the former assembly place of the islanders near our caves. The natives, who had been forcefully interned by the Japanese, seemed to have been transferred to somewhere else under US protection. On arrival, we found that their household goods had been left untouched. There were powders of tapioca, cycad, etc. and some leftovers of taros<sup>2</sup> under a tree. In a

banana plantation at the rear, cooking bananas were left behind. I was told that the natives lived on breadfruits and cooking bananas as their staples. On average, it was said that seven boiled bananas were sufficient for each individual. On this occasion, I boiled green bananas and I became full when I ate six of them.

However, we were unable to stay there any longer. We had to look for the division headquarters to receive their orders. Therefore, after dark, we tried to proceed to Pago again even though we had once given up going there because it was reportedly dangerous. It rained every day relentlessly and we were thoroughly soaked to the skin. Due to the endless hunger and exhaustion, some became mentally depressed and committed suicide. Some became physically ill and died. Some decided to take a separate course of action and parted with us. Thus, we were gradually becoming fewer and fewer.

We struggled through the jungle, crept on our hands and knees through the foxtail grass fields, and had a very difficult way forward. We dispatched scouts at different times, but none ever came back to report. Therefore, we proceeded without knowing what was happening. Finally, we collided head on with a large number of US troops who seemed to have invaded the island from Pago Bay on the east coast. Thirty of us were killed in the battle. Captain Tsuchiya said:

Under the circumstances, it seems no longer possible for us to join the Division. It is moreover becoming increasingly disadvantageous for us in future to operate in such a large group. Therefore, from this point onwards, each platoon shall act on its own. I hope that every one of you can endure to accomplish your part of this mission by way of making a long-term survival war in the jungle.

The company was dissolved *de facto*. 'This is not to admit our defeat', the captain added, 'We have merely changed our course of action.' I think that it was 10 August 1944. It seemed to me that it had taken a lot longer since we had set out from the Fena farm. In reality, however, it was only five days.

'Under the circumstances', Warrant Officer Yamamoto and the sappers said, 'the only choice left for us, which is the only becoming

one for Japanese men, is to charge and throw ourselves against the enemy!’ They then departed.

The supply company agreed to obey their commander’s order to undertake a survival war in the jungle until reinforcements arrived from Japan. I followed Platoon Commander Inaba and parted with Captain Tsuchiya and the others. There are a variety of separations in one’s life. On this occasion, it was particularly painful to part with the others knowing that both sides might die tomorrow. However, whenever I thought of the bitter hardships which were bound to befall us thenceforth, I affirmed to myself, ‘Hang it! I cannot die in such a place. I shall never give up.’

Our Inaba Platoon, about thirty strong, returned to Talofoto. As we could not walk along the coast-side road, we cautiously went through the jungle again. All that I had in my possession at that time was a bullet bag with twenty bullets, a bayonet and three hand grenades hung from my leather belt, as well as a water bottle, a haversack, gaiters, a set of military uniforms, a set of formal Japanese men’s skirts (*bakama*) and a Model 99 Arisaka,<sup>3</sup> .303 (7.7 mm) calibre, five-bullet clip, bolt action, rifle.

Lieutenant Inaba declared:

I am planning to get off this island. I think that a number of the steel pontoons of our sappers should still be left at the mouth of the River Talofoto. Probably about twenty of them should be there. I have also seen some folding boats there. I think that each pontoon can accommodate up to fifty people. Therefore, we shall go there.

A steel pontoon could be separated into three parts: the prow, the stern and the centre. When we built a bridge, we set out these three pieces vertically and thrust planks across them to make up a floating bridge first. Normally, these three parts were screwed together to make up a boat to be rowed manually.

‘Get off this island?’ I replied in a knee-jerk reaction as the idea was beyond my comprehension. The lieutenant replied:

Success or failure, I will take a chance. On this point, jungle warfare

seems to me the same thing. It would be more risky to get off this island but more promising than to stay here to fight a jungle warfare, because we can see our future more precisely after getting off. In my view, if we row out into the ocean on a raft made up of two pontoons, chances are that we may be rescued by a Japanese submarine or ships.

Lieutenant Inaba seemed to have had this idea for some time. As we heard the details from him, we were beginning to develop a glimmer of hope. The lieutenant went on:

After having made up a raft, camouflage the raft with coconut leaves to make it appear like a drifting tree or something. As regards food, we shall bring a hundred coconuts and cycad nuts. We shall make a sail from the canvas of a tent to use when we are out on the open sea. We could survive for a while by fishing.

Thus, Lieutenant Inaba's proposal was based on a detailed plan. However, cycad nuts (*federico*) contained potassium cyanide, and were therefore inedible without washing them thoroughly in water very carefully. Neither the lieutenant nor I knew this fact at that time.

Our ignorance of such matters was, I think, caused by the grossly naïve view of the Japanese leaders who were too ready to advocate a long-term survival war verbally. All the knowledge about the south which I had had before coming to Guam came from my reading of a book entitled, 'A Book to Assure Our Victory', published by the Ministry of War. I read it while I was on board the *Akimaru* en route to Guam. This book was circulated among all the soldiers on board, but did not reach all of us. I borrowed it and only had a quick look. The book stated absurdly that wild bananas were not edible but the innermost part of a banana tree was like Chinese cabbage; that when it became hard and fibrous due to age, we could make noodles out of it; that if we boil the green pods of a silk tree's seeds,<sup>4</sup> they became a substitute for field peas; that the roots of a palm tree could be a substitute for Japanese white radish; and so forth. 'With this book', it was asserted, 'we can endure and survive even if the

war continues a hundred years.’ Strangely, this particular sentence stayed in my mind.

However, general knowledge of this nature turned out to be of little use for my real survival in the jungle. We simply acquired knowledge about food after a large number of trials, painful and bitter failures, and difficulties identifying which was edible. That War Ministry book, in respect both of its title, ‘A Book to Assure Our Victory’, and of its contents, seemed to me to represent the utter irresponsibility of our Japanese military authorities. Every time I recalled it, I became infuriated with an ever-increasing intensity of burning anger and wrath.

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By the way, Captain Tsuchiya and his group had seemed to be intending to fight in the jungle. However, when they overheard Lieutenant Inaba’s idea to get off the island, they appeared to have changed their mind. While we struggled our way through the jungle, they ran along the coastal road and reached the mouth of the River Talofofu long before we did. As I was told later, because Captain Tsuchiya realized that the Americans rarely operated late at night, he decided to run along the coastal road late at night.

There were reasons why not only Lieutenant Inaba but also Captain Tsuchiya did not think that getting off Guam constituted any disciplinary offence. In the army, this would constitute the offences of abandoning the battle and of desertion.<sup>5</sup> However, according to a variety of navy officers who had been with us on a number of occasions so far, in the navy, escape was recognized as a part of a combat action, i.e. the change of a course of action. Of course, I think that this was an inference from the fact that escape was a legitimate action when a ship was sinking. If it was so in the navy, Lieutenant Inaba and other officers then thought, why not so in the army. They no longer seemed to feel any sense of guilt about getting off the island.

When Captain Tsuchiya and his group had reached the mouth of the River Talofofu before dawn, they vaguely saw something which looked like tents belonging to the Americans on the other side of the river. Corporal Shōji Agata, who had been isolated from his own

infantry corps and followed Captain Tsuchiya, apparently feeling obliged to do so, volunteered to scout alone. 'Because the Americans are victorious', he said, 'they may not be so vigilant. They are likely to have fallen asleep by now, so it should be safe. I will go and have a look.'

Unfortunately, Corporal Agata got his leg caught by a wire from which a number of empty cans were hanging, making a loud clattering noise. The Americans opened fire. However, because they fired blindly while half asleep, their bullets flew high above the heads of the Japanese. I heard this story from Sergeant Hosohara who had successfully dived into the river to survive and joined us later. All the others dispersed. Captain Tsuchiya has not been heard of since.

By that time, we, too, had reached a point looking over the River Talofoto. We broke into some of the unoccupied houses of the locals and discovered a little salt which had obviously been left by a previous Japanese group. As we had slept only under the open sky and had eaten only biscuits for the previous two or three days, we were longing for cooked rice. We cooked rice with salt and rubbed salt into green aubergines. It was already 2 o'clock in the morning when the meal was ready. It was the first peaceful night we had had since the battle in Pago. We relaxed for the first time. Once our stomachs were full, and because we were so exhausted, we became drowsy. Just as we were about to go to sleep, 'zip . . . zip . . .', some bullets flew from below. 'What has happened?' We lay flat down on the ground. 'Perhaps, our smoke has been detected while we were cooking?' It was so alarming that we did not sleep at all and we left the place.

Eventually, we came to a point from which the mouth of the River Talofoto was in sight. A bridge had been built near the mouth where there had been nothing only three days before. A cluster of pillboxes had also been constructed. As we zoomed in more carefully, there were barbed-wire fences under the bridge. When we looked out to sea, we could see that the Americans had boarded some of our steel pontoons by which we were supposed to get off the island. They were rowing the pontoons under the lovely morning sun in such a relaxed and joyful fashion that we felt even more miserable than before.

*The Last Days of Our Platoon (6 August–September 1944)*

Lieutenant Inaba ordered us to hide ourselves in the nearby jungle for a while. He remained silent, seeming to sink into deep thoughts. One day, he seemed to have made up his mind and gathered us together. He said:

Under the circumstances, we have to give up getting off this island. At the same time, I cannot think of any alternative plan for our future. I regret to tell you this, however, I would like to dissolve the platoon henceforth. Also, please make me an ordinary Inaba. As Japan has lost the war, I would rather kill myself than linger on in this miserable life.

I entreated:

Platoon Commander, why do you have to commit suicide now? Please do not kill yourself. We shall keep our life so long as we have life. It would be an honour to die if we are shot by the enemy. But why is it wrong to live until that eventuality?

I added:

We still do not know whether Japan has won or lost the war. We shall die together, when and only when the time to die arrives, shan't we?

We entreated him frantically:

Until that time, please, please take us with you.

Lieutenant Inaba then answered:

'I see. I won't kill myself.'

He then fell silent again. After a long silence, the lieutenant spoke again, 'We will be easily discovered by the enemy if we continue to act in a group of as many as thirty people. Therefore, after having dissolved the platoon, we shall make a number of small groups of those who find each other agreeable. Yokoi, you shall make your

own group and start a survival war. Matsunaga, you, too, shall do the same, please.'

'Sir', I said, 'I have respected you to this day. Therefore, please take me with you.'

The lieutenant replied:

Yokoi, you have your subordinates. I cannot allow you to abandon them. However, although we are parting with each other, let us keep in touch with each other. Remember the three caves where we ate beef at the upper stream of this river. We shall assemble there from time to time. For example, write on the wall, 'Coming on such and such day of such and such month; Yokoi.' We shall certainly go there on that day.

After a similar conversation, it was decided that Lieutenant Inaba would lead Private Superior Takemitsu Matsuda, Private First Class Takeo Morioka, Private First Class Uemura of the Kodama Section, and a certain Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. I was to lead Takeo Unno, Masazumi Yamauchi, Norio Nagao and Shigeji Shimizu. Private Superior Matsunaga was to lead all the rest. Thus, we who had been reduced to thirty survivors by then, were further divided into three groups and dispersed.

Lieutenant Inaba and Private Superior Matsunaga have never been heard of since. Lieutenant Inaba might have not yet given up his plan to get off the island, because he kept a navy officer in his group. Of course, this is pure speculation on my part. I do not remember on which day we dispersed into three groups. But I think that it was probably at the beginning of September 1944.

## CHAPTER 6

# ‘SURVIVAL WAR’ IN THE JUNGLE (SEPTEMBER 1944 – MAY 1945)



By early September 1944, US forces in Guam were concentrating on mopping-up operations. Their main forces seemed to have embarked on preparing for battles nearer to mainland Japan, such as Iwo Jima (half way between Tokyo and Guam) and Okinawa. Their fleet was no longer visible. They extended our navy’s airfields on the island to operate a large number of huge aircraft.

One book has suggested that the number of surviving Japanese soldiers, who had hidden themselves in the jungle, was about two thousand. It was true that most of the Japanese, more than 20,000 strong in Guam, bravely fought to make themselves a shield against the US advance in the Pacific. Guam has generally been regarded as one of the islands where Japanese garrisons had completely perished in battle. Even so, it was also true that an uncertain number of soldiers survived the defeat, miserably wandering about in the jungle like us.

After parting with Lieutenant Inaba, with whom I had shared our fate since we were in Manchuria, our Yokoi group of five strong went to an upper stream of the River Talofof from its mouth along its valley. We had no specific destination, but naturally we thought that access to water and food was an essential condition for our survival.

I told my fellow group members on the way:

Since the Platoon has been dissolved, I am the most senior person

among us. However, under the circumstances, I would like to be an ordinary Yokoi, just as our Platoon Commander had become an ordinary Inaba. Therefore, please do not call me 'Squad Leader' henceforth. Since we know each other well, we shall decide on our conduct democratically. OK?

As before, we hid ourselves in the jungle during the daytime and searched around for food cautiously in the early morning and in the evening. We were like stray dogs.

Tetsuo Unno had been attached to Lieutenant Inaba. He had secretly appropriated for himself the lieutenant's blanket designed for officers. Soon, Takeo Morioka, who was allocated to the lieutenant's group, approached Unno and demanded that it be handed over. 'The person who has deserted us', Unno said, 'is no longer our boss!' He refused to give the blanket back. There was no longer any hierarchy. There was only a relationship between man and man.

One day, we dried the blanket in the open air as it had been soaked in the rain. In the meantime, we hid ourselves in a small bush to take some sleep. Hearing birds clucking nearby, we woke up with a start, fearing enemy attacks. We crept out, rubbing our eyes and watching around carefully. What we saw were ten or so strong Japanese soldiers going after the birds, and one of them was carrying off Unno's blanket. Unno exchanged a brief altercation with him. The soldier, however, did not listen and made off with the blanket. I regretted then my failure to suggest to Unno that anything which had been taken by force would be taken away. If the blanket were to be taken by somebody else, I should have told Unno in the first place, 'the lieutenant is still your former commander. Give it back.'

There was an officer among the ten or so group of Japanese soldiers. I asked him to take us with him. 'I am the 18th Regiment's adjutant', he said. 'I have ten soldiers. I am sorry that I cannot have any more, because the greater the number, the more risky it is in jungle warfare. Please take responsibility as a section leader. Be patient and cautious. Don't rush to die. The Japanese troops are coming to rescue us soon. OK? You shall wait until then.' The officer parted with us rather reluctantly.

Next day, we came across the leader of the tenth section of the same company, Corporal Matsubara with whom I had become acquainted when I served at the Regiment headquarters. Medic Lance Corporal Mikio Shichi, Tsuneo Shibata, Taketoshi Ōtsuki who used to be in my section, and some others were with him.

'Yokoi', they asked, 'Have you got any matches?' I replied, 'I can give you five or six'. I gave them about ten matches. We were told then for the first time that Captain Tsuchiya and his group had collided with the Americans at the mouth of the River Talofoyo, and had put them to flight at the cost of a great number of casualties, including the captain himself. While we exchanged information with each other, Shibata and Ōtsuki began to ask me, 'Squad Leader, please take us with you.' Shichi also wanted to join us. 'We are as many as five, already', I replied. 'Eight is too many. We shall stay as we are now, shan't we?'

However, our Nagao whispered to me, 'Shichi is a medic and so he may be useful to us.' Also, Shichi and our Shimizu came from the same city, so Shichi alone joined us in the end. I myself had frequently seen Shichi at a medical centre in Manchuria so that I, too, was familiar with him.

Shichi seemed to have been acquainted with the locality and advised us that it was dangerous to stay there any longer. I also noticed that there were some roads nearby and thus our presence could easily be detected. There were also plenty of Japanese taro potatoes and 'sixteen beans to the pod' beans planted by the locals,<sup>1</sup> so that we had easy access to food. However, it seemed to me that the easier the access to food, the more likely to attract the attention of an enemy patrol. As soon as night was setting in, therefore, we quickly made our way towards the upper reaches of the river to the caves in Talofoyo where we had eaten beef some time before. However, we unexpectedly found ourselves at the assembly point for the natives' internment which we had passed by before. 'Gosh!' No sooner were we regretting that than the dawn broke. So we hurriedly found a hut at the rear of the assembly point, and hid ourselves beneath the floor where its supporting pillars were.

Perhaps by instinct, we kept ourselves hidden there during the day to survive. This was because some natives turned up with

American soldiers around noon to pick up their household property, and there were frequent sounds of gunfire being exchanged with those Japanese soldiers who were hanging around near there. 'Some of our friends are being killed', I thought. 'I have to go out to fight.' I knew very well that I had to. However, we simply did not have enough bullets to fight. We only had enough bullets to defend ourselves. To our chagrin, we had to bear it all and look after our own lives. We were only able to wait and see.

'It is very dangerous to stay here', I thought as we lay in the space between the ground and the floor of the hut. 'However, we have neither a map of the island nor a pocket compass. Where shall we go?' Although Guam was a small island, we were acquainted with only a part of Piti, Agat, Mt Alifan, Fena and the west coast which we went up and down during the construction of the airfields; in other words, only those patches of places where we had actually been. Most of those places had in fact been held under US control on the day they invaded.

Anyway, no sooner did the sun set than we began to thread our way again through the jungle. We came across a bomb-shelter dug out by our navy's construction unit. We breathed a sigh of relief. Since it was still dark at night, we felt secure and slept well. As we had been unable to have any proper food, we were becoming worn out day by day. We had been condemned to wander to nowhere, so we were unable to expect too much. We slept deeply. When we woke up, it was already dawn. 'Goodness me, if I had woken up earlier!' At that time, there were intense mopping-up operations going on so that we had to keep vigilant at all times. We rushed deep into the jungle in great haste.

As we pushed our way through the branches of trees, we saw flocks of feral poultry here and there. They ran about in clumps of trees trying to run away from us. We were unable to resist our strong appetite to eat them, and decided to wait around there until evening in order to hunt them.

In the dusk, we dashed around competing with each other trying to catch the birds. However, they had become wild again after being so frequently bullied by hungry Japanese soldiers. They ran and jumped around so swiftly like pheasants or copper pheasants that

we were unable to capture any. We were thus compelled to attack them at night when they were sleeping. We waited for some while, fighting large swarms of mosquitoes. Under the moonlight, we searched for their nest. Look! Flocks of birds were sleeping on a tree, one flock here, another flock on an upper branch. We fastened our bayonets to bamboo bars to make instant spears. We tried to thrust them through with these spears. However, the birds ran around desperate to escape, flapping their wings. Unfortunately, we failed to capture a single one and retreated.

'How can we hunt them?' We put our heads together to find a solution. As soon as it became dark again, we removed a wire fence, which was apparently a pigsty's fence, from an unoccupied private house which we had come across on the way. We made a hemispherical frame and a square-shaped entrance with bamboos, and attached the wire fencing to them. As bait, we used some corn which we had requisitioned from an unoccupied native hut. We had to do everything stealthily not to be detected by anyone. We searched for a place deep within the jungle where no human being would come, but birds did pass, and set our trap under a large tree. The entrance was lifted up with a thin stick. Look, birds competed with each other to eat the bait, and happily entered the trap together in a line.

After having suffered from severe hunger, we were delighted to see them successfully captured. By next evening, each of us had made a few traps. Some made large traps. But in order to feed six people, one or two birds were enough. Therefore, I made a small, more conveniently portable trap which looked like a quarter of a sphere. I set it at the bottom of a tree. Even this small trap captured at least two birds on each occasion. The chicken tasted very good. However, as we ate it every day, eventually we had had enough of it. Soon thereafter we decided to move deeper inside the jungle. We stretched a tarpaulin as a roof, laid twigs tightly together to cover the ground, in the mode of wooden slats, and thus began our simple life there.

One day, Yoshizō Nihei, who had been made a civilian employee of the army, came over on his own to join us. 'I have some rice', he said, 'so could we please cook it together?' He said that he had

wandered in the jungle alone, occasionally climbing up a tree to look for friendly troops at dawn. Because he had spotted our cooking smoke, he came to join us. At that time, we gathered food at night and cooked it before dawn. Even after the meal, there was no sign of his departing. I thought it too heartless to force him away, because he was ten years older than I was and he had no weapon of any kind. I let him into our group from that day onwards.

However, a group of seven was a very large family.

‘If so and so cooks, he monopolizes the meat and gives us scum.’

‘He does not gather food for the other people.’

Soon, a number of similar complaints began to be reported to me. Eventually, our rice ran out. An argument developed in front of me about food. Most of the time, I acted as a conciliator. Such complaints emerged because our jungle was relatively peaceful at that time. If we were facing great danger at all times, we would be closely united and would have nothing to grumble at.

One day, everyone said that they wanted beef. At that time, some cattle and pigs of the natives had, in the absence of their carers, returned to the wild in the jungle. Therefore, so long as we were willing, it was possible to hunt some. But no one wanted to stay behind to look after our hut. We had to stay inside during the day. Once out, we could look for coconuts and above all, refresh ourselves. There might be something new outside.

‘OK, I will stay behind’, I volunteered to take care of the hut.

Everyone set out enthusiastically and cheerfully. Since there was a piece of yam potato left, I decided to cook yam soup for every one. I followed the procedure *à la* ‘Nagoya’, my home city. I ground the yam and boiled it in hot water with salt. I welcomed everyone back home with the soup. Since there was only one piece of yam, the amount was very small. However, I wanted to provide my colleagues with some comfort and to thank them for their efforts. Therefore, I cooked it with a heartfelt commitment, to please them.

‘Gosh!’ Shichi said on his return, ‘Is *this* all? You must have eaten almost all of it, mustn’t you?’

His words stung me. They were unable to find any game and were distressed because their mission had been unsuccessful. Shichi was from Gifu Prefecture. There, they ground yam into hot stock broth

with some other ingredients and simmered it. Shichi did not know any other recipe. Well yes, that recipe would have made the soup bulkier. Since I had eaten nothing, I was severely offended by Shichi. However, I thought that he would eventually understand and I suppressed my irritation and endured his criticism. While living in a group, I ought not to touch any important provisions in the absence of my companions. Cook in front of the other people. Otherwise, even an act of kindness would be suspected and spoilt. I learnt this lesson from this bitter experience.

However, at that time, we still had some salt to hand. When we wandered around, there was always something to find, for example, in the natives' unoccupied houses. We were able to enjoy a fairly reasonable meal because of the chicken, for example. After plucking a bird, we grilled it in its entirety to remove all the feathers; washed it in water and cut off meat from the bones; grilled the bones, wings, legs and head until they became crispy and crunchy to eat; stewed the meat with papaya slices in coconut milk with some salt. The American patrols had become less frequent. I was regaining my bodily strength after the long bout of diarrhoea. Gradually, I was restoring my composure.

The following night, a particularly emaciated ox was requisitioned. The ox had been left tied to a tree apparently after the natives had been interned by the Japanese. Nihei was a civilian employee of the army so that he had no rifle. But he had a Japanese sword. He stabbed the ox's throat and poked its brain. The ox was still standing as if nothing had happened. It did not even moo. I was impressed to see that the ox did not show any sign of last-minute panic. Since it did not seem to die, Nihei beheaded it with his sword. Then it fell sideways with a thud.

Although the ox was emaciated, we were only seven. The meat was more than enough for us. The trouble was that we did not know how to preserve beef yet. We tore off the skin, cut out as much meat as we wanted, and ate it. Nihei suggested that we pickle the remaining beef with salt to preserve it. We packed the beef in two large clay pots which had also been requisitioned from a private house. Nihei had used up all the salt which we had on this occasion. 'How reckless you are!' shouted Nagao furiously; he had not got

along well with Nihei from the beginning. We hung two legs which we did not even touch, from a tree branch. By the following morning, they were both densely covered with swarms of bluebottle flies and maggots and were thoroughly rotten.

As regards the skin, I followed the tanning process which I observed earlier in Agana. I plucked off the hair and dried the tanned hide under the sun. However, my attempt turned out to be unsuccessful. Swarms of bluebottle flies collected on the hide which soon turned rotten and became a nest for them rather than being dried as a piece of leather. Regrettably, I had to give it up.

The reason why I thought of making leather was that our military boots were already worn out, because we kept wearing them for almost twenty-four hours a day, had no shoe cream to put on them, and the boots had been soaked in rain and immersed in water when we walked in and across rivers. Our military boots also had hobnails in their soles so that they made a huge noise as we walked. The hobnails also left sharp and deep footprints, thereby increasing the chance of being tracked and getting caught by a US patrol. Civilian Nihei wore canvas shoes. However, he had lost one of the pair and the remaining shoe was already too damaged to be worn. For these reasons, I attempted to make leather shoes for them.

Instead of making leather, I gathered leather slippers, pieces of tent canvas, etc. from around about. At that time, there were lots of remains of a great variety of war provisions scattered throughout the jungle, which satisfied our needs. First of all, I cut up old shoes, made models from them, and cut out pieces of canvas to match the models. To make the insole of a shoe, I cut a piece of canvas and that of leather to make it double. For the sole of a shoe, I darned it to the canvas piece which had been cut to the model. I thought that the toe cover would quickly wear out, so I darned pieces of leather together on the toe cover and the sides of a shoe. In order to put the sole and the upper part of a shoe together, I made a drill from a needle to open up eyelets. I made two shoe needles from a piece of wire, extracted threads from a piece of canvas and double-darned the sole and the upper part of a shoe together from both sides. I was able to invent this working process entirely on my own because I used to be a tailor. When I met a shoemaker after my return to

Japan, I learned that he followed more or less the same process as I did. In order to cover toes and sides with a piece of leather, I made hook pins from a gun cartridge which I had picked up from somewhere. I spread it and sliced it into a number of long rectangular sheets to make hook pins. I nailed them onto the sole. I also knitted a number of thin shoelaces from the fibres of the *pago*<sup>2</sup> (hibiscus) tree. Later, I picked up a rubber tyre from somewhere. I added an additional rubber layer to the sole to make it thicker. The rubber sole made a shoe a little heavier, but it prevented the shoe from making a loud noise.

The manufacture of these shoes involved very onerous work. However, they did not last long, because it rained so much. We could not live on bare feet. In the meantime, we ran out of pieces of leather and canvas. After a few years, we made straw sandals, instead. I carefully disentangled the fibres of the hibiscus tree to make a cord. I made the main cord, which sustained the entire fabric of a knitted sandal, three times thicker than a normal cord to make it stronger and more durable. I made the thong of sandal straps in front very thick and tapered both side straps, in order to make sandals easier to wear. It was not easy to make the pair of straps tight. But lifting up the sandal thong, I could knit the remaining strands together by putting a metal tracing spatula (which looked like a screwdriver) through the strands to make the thong thicker. To mend a sandal, I removed the damaged parts, and knitted up the rest with the metal tracing spatula. The hibiscus tree produced very high quality fibres, which could be used for making a wide variety of items, such as clothes, nets and provisions sacks. However, to cut down as many hibiscus trees as we wanted was to make our presence very conspicuous in the eyes of our enemies. Therefore, in the end, in order to fabricate our sandals, we made cords from the fibres of the outer shell of a coconut. The hibiscus fibres were vulnerable to water and easily decayed so that I had to make two pairs of sandals a month for myself. By contrast, the coconut shell fibres were strong in water so that I was able to wear a pair of sandals knitted with them for as long as six months, with occasional necessary repairs. Therefore, two pairs were enough for a year. Nakahata, who joined my group later on, and I knew how to knit straw sandals.

I grew up in a farming village. Nakahata studied at an agricultural school in Hiroshima so that he had some knowledge of farming matters.

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‘Shall we go deeper’, Nihei suggested to us one day, ‘into the jungle? We have to find a place where we can settle down and where no American is likely to come. Otherwise, we cannot survive much longer.’

We had lived in this temporary hut for quite some time. As we felled trees for firewood every day, an open space developed in this fairly sparse part of the jungle, increasing the chance of detection by US patrols. Therefore, all of us agreed with Nihei’s proposal. In addition, there was no water nearby. Early every morning, and with great caution, we had to take turns to go to a well in a certain unoccupied premises belonging to the natives, to fill our water bottles. This was really very inconvenient.

We began to move deeper within the jungle. By that time, holes had developed in our old second-hand tent which we had earlier requisitioned from the natives’ premises. Rain leaked in. We then came across an unoccupied house of a second-generation Japanese on the island called ‘Shimizu’. We removed the galvanized iron sheets which had been used as a roof, and carried them back at night. We felled some trees nearby and built the wooden framework of a house. We constructed two rather fine dwellings – one for sleeping in, the other for cooking and living in. We kept some distance between the two. Every night, we took the liberty of taking some household items from Shimizu. We were able to sleep under the galvanized sheet iron roof for the first time since the American invasion. Looking back at that time now, I can say that it was the first and last occasion on which I had this kind of rather decent human dwelling.

There was no US patrol. We were relaxed and waited calmly for reinforcements from Japan to come and rescue us. In order to relieve ourselves from boredom, we made a Chinese checker (*go*) board and a Japanese chess (*shōgi*) board by knitting the leaves of *kaffo*<sup>3</sup> (*pandanus*) trees. We made men for the games from pieces of

paper. We also happened to pick up a set of playing cards along the way. We played these games for stakes. Our stakes were deep-fried toad legs. A long time before when the Spaniards ruled Guam, they were troubled by the increasing number of snakes. In order to get rid of the snakes, they released a number of poisonous toads. Consequently, there was a relatively greater number of toads but very few snakes on Guam. Our cooking instructions for fried toad were these: wash the whole body of a toad in water; behead it and take out the glands containing poison; remove the skin; take care lest the poisonous white fluids touch the meat; remove the internal organs; then wash the meat thoroughly in water to remove all the blood; and fry with palm oil. A lot earlier, we deep-fried the eggs of a poisonous toad and tasted them a little as a substitute for fish roe. They tasted rather good, but after some hours, all of us began to suffer from severe diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach-ache due to the rank poison of the toad. We suffered so severely that we thought that we were going to die. Later on, I used to extract the yellow liquid from the internal organs of a toad, heated it up in a pan, and kept it in a container in order to use it to heal a wound. Anyway, those who lost a game had to go and catch a toad in the early morning, cook and deep-fry it and serve it to the winners. At that time, we were so relaxed that some of us sang some popular songs, especially when it rained.

On one of these relatively peaceful days, Bunzō Minagawa, Tadashi Itō and Tokujirō Miyazawa visited our house. We had a chat comforting each other. 'It is dangerous', they warned us, 'to stay here. You see, your footprints have led us to this place. Moreover, what are you eating? At the rear of the place where we are, there is a stock farm full of cattle and pigs. You will wither away if you keep eating only vegetables.' They then went off.

One week later, however, Minagawa suddenly turned up and said, 'Because Itō has a rifle, he is overbearing. I cannot get on well with him. Could you please let me join your group?' He joined my group. Minagawa had no rifle because he was a trench mortar soldier.

Minagawa suggested that he guide us to the stock farm. One night, we went there to find a cow. Since we had no bag, Minagawa

brought a hammock from an empty house of the natives and unravelled it to take threads, and knitted a bag to carry on his back. I made the same as he did. However, I must have caught my bag on a branch on the way. I realized that I had lost my bag only after I reached the farm. I went back to search for it, but was unable to find it.

The stock farm was called 'Fujita Stock Farm' and was owned by a Japanese person.<sup>4</sup> It had by then become deserted. The fences were broken and many of the cattle seemed to have run away into the jungle. We were unable to find a cow that night. As I had a bird trap just in case, I set it in an inconspicuous place in the nearby jungle and caught two wild birds. We ate them with much gusto, not least because there was no beef available. We had not camped outside for a long time by then, but we decided to do so on that occasion. We slept on the leaves of a betel palm tree which we laid down on the ground, while creating smoke to deter mosquitoes. We were hardly able to operate during the daytime because there was said to be a US army camp about three miles (5 km) from there. On the next night, fortunately, our efforts in coming over to this area was rewarded with a large herd of cows which happened to pass us by. They did not know that we were ambushing them and aiming our rifles at them. There was a large mother cow followed by her young calves. 'So innocently and peacefully', I thought, 'they are travelling for food. How on earth can I shoot them?' I had a sense of guilt and was utterly confused.

'Who is going to shoot?'

'Rajah, I am.'

I aimed at the biggest black cow in the herd and shot through her body. Since it was such a large herd, even a blind shooter would have hit one. Even though one of their poor colleagues was shot, the others did not even try to run away. They approached the fallen one and smelt its blood. Calves approached us even nearer, to such an extent that we could grab them. It was impossible to capture any by our bare hands without a rope. Since they were nourished in the stock farm, they were accustomed to human beings. However, I was afraid that they would gradually be alienated from the humans and they would learn to run away as soon as they caught sight of a man.

My heart was tormented by seeing their present utterly innocent behaviour.

After firing the gun, and thus making a noise, we had to be vigilant. We hastily cut up the cow and moved to grassland which was 220–330 yards (200–300 m) away. Under the cover of darkness, we laid down big trunks of a papaya tree as a base; placed over it a wire netting which somebody had picked up from the radiator of a vehicle from somewhere, and put a galvanised iron sheet on top. This made an instant cooking stove. We roasted chunks of beef one after another. At first, each of us ate as much beef as we were able to, and we roasted the rest until it became hard and crisp. Otherwise, the beef would not have lasted until the next morning.

We divided the work among ourselves: some chopped beef, some roasted it and some gathered firewood. It took a whole night to cook the cow. We had to do it quickly because the US camp was so near. Each of us carried chunks of crispy beef in his bag. We wrapped raw fat in green palm leaves lest it became rotten, and then placed it into a separate bag. Since I had no bag with me, I carried all my colleagues' rifles on my shoulder. As we were unable to operate in daylight, we had to wait until evening, deep within the jungle, far from the place which we had done the cooking. We walked along an unfamiliar path with such a heavy load that it was already near dawn when we managed to reach our houses. Although we were thoroughly exhausted, we had to heat the fat up in a pan to extract suet before it became rotten, and to sort out the pieces of crisp beef. We worked until sunrise.

Thereafter, from time to time, we went to hunt a cow. Back in our houses, after each hunting session, we ate lots of hard pieces of crisp beef without salt or any seasoning for a long while. The beef was utterly tasteless. Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt? We yearned for salt.

## CHAPTER 7

# JAPAN HAS SURRENDERED; COME OUT! (JUNE – DECEMBER 1945)



Some time around June 1945, smoke began to be seen from an unoccupied native house near us. We thought that the natives might have come back, so we all went on a scouting trip. No one was seen. We then thought that some Japanese might be hiding themselves around there. We called them softly but there was no reply. We surveyed the area and found some remains of a man-made fire which looked new, and a piece of military boot. We thought that they might have run away as we approached. We were longing for friends, so we went out scouting again soon after sunset on the following day. This time, we heard tapping sounds like chopping something from nearby. We followed the sound and found a cliff a little way away from a road, on which a number of wisteria vines were climbing. When we approached the cliff, there were footprints going up and down the cliff. We realized that these footprints were nothing other than those of Japanese soldiers. Therefore, I quietly climbed up the cliff and found a hut with a galvanized sheet iron roof. ‘Hello!’ I called in Japanese. Three soldiers came out looking surprised. We exchanged information with each other. They talked about the difficulties in making a fire. We promised to see each other again. We told them our whereabouts and parted before daybreak without asking for their names.

A few hours after we returned to our hut, ‘bang . . . bang . . . bang . . .’, we heard some bangs of gunfire. The bangs seemed to have come from the hut on the cliff, so we took our weapons and

looked out at each position. Then we heard rustles. We held our breath, vigilantly trying to ascertain whether the source of the rustles was our friends or not. The source turned out to be the three Japanese whom we had met the night before.

‘What has happened?’

‘After you left us’, they answered, ‘we heard rustles. We thought that you had returned and peeped outside. There was a man who looked Japanese. No sooner were we off our guard than we were shot at from behind. We frantically ran away. Presumably, our hut was burnt down.’

They were so scared that their eyes seemed to merge into the pallor of their skins. Presumably, the man who looked Japanese was an ‘undercover’ agent. Perhaps, among those Japanese who had surrendered, there might have been some who were in a position to guide the US mopping-up operations.

At dusk, the three men told us that they wanted to go and see their hut, so we, too, went to see it together. Their hut had been completely burnt down.

‘Can we stay with you for a few days?’, they asked us.

I knew that it was dangerous to make our group any larger, but it was equally hard to abandon them given their difficulties since they had been deprived of everything. In the end, they stayed on to live with us indefinitely. They were Private Superior Keizō Kamijō, Private First Class Hideo Fujita and a civilian employee of the navy called Satoru Nakahata.

Soon after these three had joined us, presumably in the middle of July 1945, I had finished my breakfast at 4.30 in the morning and was dozing back in the bedroom house which was a little away from the cookery house. All of sudden, ‘rat-a-tat . . . rat-a-tat . . .’, we were riddled with machine-gun fire from the flank. In less than no time, we ran away frantically. Instinctively, we ran in the opposite direction towards the cookery house. I crossed a road and kept running on and on about 550 to 660 yards (500–600 m) making a narrow hairbreadth escape. The US patrols blocked all the roads all day long and kept firing machine-guns randomly into the jungle. After sunset, I dared to cross one of the blockaded roads. Stealthily and vigilantly, I approached our houses. As I approached nearer,

there was a burnt and blood smell. Our two houses were burnt down. A blackish thing lay nearby. I was driven to run towards the thing and held it up in my arms. It was the body of Fujita.

Then I sensed someone was approaching me from behind, and turned. Yamauchi was standing there. 'Oh! Yamauchi,' I said, 'you have survived! How are the others?'

'Squad Leader', Yamauchi produced a green melon. 'Thank you,' I received it and asked, 'are you really all right?' He looked rather pale and unusually quiet.

'When I was running away with Nagao', he said, 'Nagao said "urgh" and fell down onto beds of watermelon. I frantically turned to the side, creeping under a number of trees to escape. Soon I came to realize that my back was aching piercingly. I hid myself behind a rock to take a rest quietly. Mr Nihei came across to me and had a look at my back. An iron nail had been driven into my back. Mr Nihei kindly pulled it out on the spot. However, my stomach has swollen and I feel terribly ill.'

'I believe', I said, 'Shichi (a medic) or someone will turn up before long. I will let him examine you. So, hold on and don't give up.'

Nagao had his chest shot through resulting in immediate death. Furthermore, his wrists had been cut off. His body lay on his back. In the meantime, the survivors gradually assembled together as if we had organized a meeting in advance. Shimizu had a shoulder wound. We first of all dug a hole to bury Fujita and Nagao without uttering a word. We searched for Kamijō but we were unable to find him as it was too dark. Yamauchi's wound was serious, but we were only able to put oil on his wound. We were so shocked by the sudden loss of the three fellow group members that we were unable to sleep. Although our bodies were exhausted, our nerves were too agitated to calm down. Every one of us had his own terrible story of the day to tell. Throughout the night we discussed what to do thereafter.

Next morning, we found Kamijō's body. After Kamijō was grievously wounded, he deliberately blew himself up by a grenade. We dug a hole on the spot and buried him. We thought it certain that the Americans were coming back to attack us again. Therefore, each of us took a handful of his own goods which had usually been

hidden for emergency, taking care of the seriously wounded Yamauchi and Shimizu, we crossed a road and moved as far as 1.8 miles (3 km) to the north and hid ourselves on a hill.

After I returned to Japan, I could not identify on a map of Guam in which of the dotted jungles we were at that time. Even then, we had absolutely no idea where on earth we were. Therefore, whenever we discussed whether we should stay here or move somewhere else, there was no solid basis on which we could possibly reach any agreement on a destination.

‘Shall we go to Inarajan’, Nihei said, ‘shall we? I used to work there and I have some acquaintances among the natives. I may be able to contact some of them. We shall surrender then, shan’t we?’

I did not find this proposal particularly attractive, but we had to agree with this because we had no alternative idea. The reason why all of us became inclined to accept Nihei’s proposal of surrender was that US patrols had come very near us again during the daytime and we all felt the ever-increasing imminence of risk to our lives as if a time-bomb was ticking.

The patrol team had reached the bottom of the cliff of our hill. Kill or be killed. They were five. ‘Shall we do it?’ We saw it an opportunity to take revenge for yesterday’s attack and everyone agreed, ‘We shall do it!’ I assigned a target to each one of my colleagues. ‘You shall do the leading one; you the second one; . . .’ We held our breath and waited until they came right beneath us. ‘OK! One, two, three . . .’ We opened fire at once. Four of them fell, but one was wounded, having thrown away his gun, he ran away dragging his leg, sometimes tumbling over. We slid down the cliff quickly and grabbed the portable food of the four. Nihei seized one of their rifles. We hid their bodies deep within the jungle at the bottom of the cliff and swept their blood away. We made the site appear as normal as possible. Having anticipated their counter-strike, we immediately moved again a mile or so (1–2 km) to the west. Since we had not eaten anything for two days, their food provisions became a sumptuous dinner for us.

When the Americans were on patrol looking for us, they carried sumptuous and highly nutritious food with them. Each of them carried a paper bag which contained four biscuits, a can of eggs and

minced meat, a can of soybeans and meat, a rectangular piece of dark brownish sweet,<sup>1</sup> five cigarettes, matches, soap and hair oil. It seems that I thought their provisions were particularly delicious as I still remember every single item which was inside the bag.

Inarajan, the place where Nihei suggested that we go, was located to the south of the River Talofoto. It was a village near the seashore on the east coast of Guam, and was situated near its southernmost part. When we were about to depart the next morning, Yamauchi, who had a bullet in his abdomen, began to say, 'Leave me here. My stomach is so swollen that I cannot move. Please leave me here.'

He had been shot from behind and had a bullet lodged in his flesh causing gas to develop in his stomach which had swollen. Although Shichi was a medic, he had not enough skill to extract the bullet nor had he the tools to do so. Because we were losing the war, we were unable to help those who could be saved with proper medical care. They had to die in agony.

'If you would like to stay here', I said, 'stay here. When you are able to move again, follow us. Our destination is Inarajan. We will walk through the jungle, so we may be able to see each other again. Take care, and do not hurry to die.'

I gave him the base of a wine glass which I had picked up from somewhere. 'This functions as a lens', I told him, 'to help you make a fire.'

However, it was very hard for us to leave him there. 'Why don't you go?' Yamauchi prompted us to go, 'please go'. We stayed there until nightfall. But we had no choice but to go in order to survive. We parted with tears, very much against our will. Obviously, Yamauchi was unable to survive much longer.

We followed Nihei. He, too, did not know the way very well. We never had such a troubled march before and never after. To make matters worse, we realized, we had actually climbed up Pasture Hill, half way between Talofoto and Fena, which meant that we had proceeded right in the opposite direction to Inarajan. I did not quite comprehend what Nihei was thinking. It was a mystery which nobody knew for sure, whether he did not know the way well, or he simply walked at random from the very beginning, or he felt uneasy about surrendering in a group as large as seven people.

At daybreak, we heard dogs barking and children crying from below the jungle. 'It is dangerous to be here.' We sneaked back deeper within the jungle. Here and there, marks of cooking activities of Japanese soldiers, a steel helmet used as a pan and an empty saké bottle<sup>2</sup> were left behind. Judging from the situation, it appeared that Japanese troops had run away under attack, unable to take their possessions with them. It seemed rather unsafe to stay there, too.

Fortunately, it was already July or August when breadfruits and potatoes began to fruit. We usually boiled them with toad meat to eat. While we were eating, we ate single-mindedly, and we were no longer concerned about the maintenance of any dignity. We ate voraciously and ravenously like hungry wolves. We would not have complained about taste or the lack of taste so long as there was enough. However, it was always just enough to ease the level of hunger. The moon shed an unsympathetic cool bluish light into our jungle. Thinking of my solitary circumstances in such a place, tears poured out by themselves, flew down my cheeks and did not stop. However, I determined in my mind to survive at any cost until the return of the Imperial Army here. Thus, we kept pushing our way through the trackless jungle to search for a better place. We kept walking in the moonlight, up hill, down dale, passing through foxtail grasses and palm farms. We came across a fine straight road which we had never seen before. 'Gosh! A sentry-box!' We lay flat down on the ground and carefully examined the surrounding environment. The entire area remained utterly silent. There was no sign of anyone present in the box. We approached the box cautiously to find that there was no one there, simply some cigarette butts, matches and leftovers of some sweets.

'How dare they surprise us so much!' Even an unmanned sentry-box was enough to threaten us. After the defeat, our nerves had been kept taut so long that they became worn out day by day. Because it was dangerous to talk to each other in a loud voice, I forbade the others to sing any song. Singing makes a man cheerful. Being cheerful, a man gradually raises his voice and becomes less cautious. In the end, we might lose our lives from carelessness. I was perhaps cowardly, or cautious or extremely nervous about these

kinds of issues. But I thought that I had to take precautions against all eventualities.

At that time, in order not to leave our footprints, for example, when we walked through a grassy area, we inserted each foot between grass fronds to make each step on a grass root and gently took the next step onto the root of another. We stalked just like a crane or a drunken man. The last man in a line sorted out the mess with a twig after our walk. After a cloudburst, we avoided walking on the earthy ground but trod on grasses because rains washed away any mud which we had left on the grasses.

When we found a place which seemed reasonably safe, we erected a simple hut thatched with *pandanus* leaves to stay for a few days. If we used green pandanus leaves, they kept rain off for about a couple of weeks before they withered away.

When we approached Pasture Hill, Nakahata, who was a good tree climber and the youngest in our group (he was still in his early twenties then), climbed up an accessible tree to reconnoitre the situation. 'A drill ground', he reported, 'has been built on the hill, and the Americans are exercising.'

'We wish we were winning.' Everyone sighed with grief. However, it never occurred to us that Japan had surrendered. We believed that our troops were sure to return.

Precisely at that moment, a herd of pigs passed us by right along our flank. All of us were possessed by an instinctive desire to eat them. However, regrettably, we were unable to fire a single shot at them because the US base was so near. Our disappointment on this occasion kept dominating our conversation for a very long time thereafter. Our mouths filled with saliva whenever we talked about that disappointing episode. We were reduced to a search for the most basic necessities. No – we had become compelled to live under such circumstances.

As Pasture Hill proved to be impassable, we turned towards Agat. This was because Nihei suggested, 'I used to be in Agat, too, so I may be able to contact some of the native acquaintances of mine there.' However, having walked all the way to Agat with great difficulty and looked at it below from the top of a nearby mountain, we could see that there was already a US base *in situ*, brightly

illuminated by electricity; as well as a new airfield which was already operational.

The technological power and abundant resources of the US forces was just amazing. Private houses had electric lights, too. But we were not particularly impressed by that. There was nothing there to prompt any sweet nostalgia for Japan. Under the circumstances, everyone except our friendly forces was our enemy.

As the access to Agat was denied, we had no choice but to return to the Talofofu valley. On the way back to Talofofu, I remember that it was the last third of July 1945 (the Japanese divide a month into three), we picked up a piece of Japanese newspaper issued in Saipan, presumably dropped from an aircraft. At that time, Nihei was keeping his diary so that we knew roughly when it was. It reported that the Allies had given the Japanese government notice of their Potsdam Declaration, and gave some details of the declaration. There was no word like ‘unconditional surrender’ nor any report that the Japanese had accepted the declaration. Since we believed that the newspaper was a piece of enemy propaganda, we simply ignored it. ‘What is Potsdam?’, we asked ourselves, ‘I think there is a town named like that somewhere, perhaps, on the west coast of Africa . . .’<sup>3</sup>

In August 1945,<sup>4</sup> we were wandering about the upper reaches of the River Talofofu. As we observed the situation from the top of a tree, we noticed some long creeping stems of root crops. We went there to dig them up, crossing a valley further away from a hill. Regrettably, all the root crops had already been taken by other Japanese and only stems remained. We found near there the deserted camp of our sappers under the *de facto* command of Warrant Officer Yamamoto. They had been chased away by the Americans. There were no victims left there, only some leftovers of US canned food, fragments of a cloth, anti-mosquito wires and ropes were scattered about. There were three huts which had the same type of roof as we had. Nearby were some bones of a few cows, presumably cooked and eaten by our sappers. In particular, we found here and there dotted footprints of dogs. We felt it unsafe to stay there and turned back. Early next morning, each of us, looking like a beggar in a shaggy appearance carrying utensils and cycad nuts,

which had been soaked in water to remove the potassium cyanide, walked through palm fields. We then came across an unexpected sight. Obviously, some other Japanese had scattered coconut shells, felled palm trees haphazardly and devastated the area thoroughly.

We went up a hill very cautiously and found a cycad tree at the bottom of which cycad leaves were spread out on the ground which someone seemed to have used for sleeping overnight. There were no coconuts left on the palm trees in the area. Then, the noise of gunfire and barking dogs was wafted across to us from around the place where we had stayed until last night. The noise continued for a few hours. It appeared that the place where we had tried to dig root crops in vain was stormed. We were so lucky to have had such a narrow escape. We looked at each other and mocked the Americans saying, 'No one is there!'

That night, I did not build a hut, but just laid down some cycad leaves on the ground to sleep on. Early next morning, we looked around from the top of a tree to see whether or not there were any Japanese troops but no smoke was seen anywhere. Instead, some potato stems were seen and we went there straight away. It was a potato field which had not yet been harvested. We were able to take a lot of potatoes. We called them 'thorny potatoes' or 'jungle potatoes'. They had black needle-like thorns 0.8–1.2 inches (2–3 cm) long at the end of their stems, and smaller prickles in their stems which were like brier thorns. Beneath the black needle-like thorns, there were a few roots with a potato at each end. Their skin was about 0.08 inch (2 mm) thick, the colour was brown and the potato itself tasted like a white potato. The thorny potato had two varieties: a round variety and a long variety. The round one tasted better, grew nearer to the surface of the ground and was easy to harvest.

It was impossible to preserve thorny potatoes. So, if we did not eat them all straightaway we buried those we wanted to keep. Even so, if there was a tiny crack, the potato turned rotten. If we left it in the open air, it turned rotten within a few days and became too bitter to eat. When we dried them by fire, they changed colour into purple. They tasted the same but did not look attractive. If we wanted to eat them in good condition, there was no way but to dig them out every time we wanted them.

We built a hut there, thatched with large leaves of *pandanus* trees. We ate thorny potatoes every morning and night. To dig them, we sharpened the end of a lime tree branch and used it as a lever. Even so, our hands bled a lot because of the thorns and prickles on the stems. We had to be vigilant against any enemy activity at all times. We had no shovel or hoe. It was therefore quite painstaking labour and we were soaked with sweat. In addition, after having dug out the potatoes, we had to fill the holes in, tread the soil down to harden it, and cover with soft earth and some potato leaves. We had to eliminate any sign of our presence.

We sometimes captured cats in a bamboo trap in the manner of a rat trap. We stewed the cat meat and thorny potatoes in coconut milk and added some tender parts of green wild grasses to eat. This was a sumptuous dinner by our standards at that time. We ate it with great gusto and relieved our fatigue of the day.

We learnt how to eat a cycad nut containing potassium cyanide when earlier we were burgling a great number of unoccupied native houses in and around Talofoto. A split cycad nut was soaked in water in one of these houses. This reminded me of my grandmother who told me how to remove harshness from acorns by soaking them in water. I applied that method to a cycad nut. At first, I suffered from diarrhoea because the poison was not thoroughly washed away. Also, I tried to get rid of its repugnant smell by drying it. I tested a variety of methods. After a large number of failed attempts, I learnt how to eat a cycad nut safely. We had no textbook in the jungle and we invented our recipes by risking our own lives. A cycad nut could be harvested for eating after about five months. If the skin inside the nutshell was marbled brown, it could be eaten. We split the nutshell open with a tribal machete. By that stage, the colour of the outermost skin of the nut gradually grew darker from green to chocolate and it began to emit a tasty smell signalling that the nut was ripe.

Snails, mice and deer ate the outer part of the cycad nut, but because there was potassium cyanide inside, they never ate the fruity white core. To eat it, we had to split it into four pieces, and soak them in running water for more than four days. When a piece became supple and pliable, its poison had finally gone. If it was still

hard, the poison had not yet gone, so we had to soak it in water again. Some began to decay in water as early as on the second day, because of bacteria which dissolved the core or made holes in it. We picked up and chose those and ate them first. The melted parts were left in water until they were precipitated at the bottom. We ate them as a kind of starch. Those which did not decay were of good quality. We placed them on a sort of bamboo steamer (each bamboo board had a number of tiny gaps or holes) and dried them either by fire or under the sun. Thereafter, we placed the dried pieces on a flat stone and milled them with another stone into powder. Then, we poured the powder onto a US anti-mosquito net to sieve it into smaller particles of powder. Each of us kept about four pints of cycad powder as portable emergency food. We sewed our handkerchiefs together to make a bag to carry the powder in.

Drying them under the sun was the best method. However, this exposed our items in full daylight so that there was a high risk of being detected by the enemy. Therefore, we made a fire in a hearth, placed a number of steamer-like bamboo boards on it, and tried to dry the cycad core pieces on the top board. This method did not work well because of the steam and smoke.

One night, Nihei picked up a very large black drogue from a US aircraft which was three feet (one metre) wide and thirty-three feet (ten metres) long. As his trousers, which he had worn since he became employed by the army, had worn out, I sewed a pair of riding breeches for him, which were convenient for walking in the jungle. In return, he gave me the remaining cloth from which I made an anti-mosquito mask. I still kept my needle and I undid a piece of canvas to extract a thread. I made four buttons by cutting small discs from a piece of celluloid. My anti-mosquito mask was like a bag with eye holes. It was essential to protect my face from any ferocious mosquito attacks. I also made a pair of anti-mosquito gloves.

On another night, we made a big fire to try and dry the cycad nuts. Next morning at daybreak, we experienced artillery shells and machine-gun bullets fired from the Pasture Hill area. We were astonished, withdrew deeper within the jungle and watched the situation. That afternoon, from Pasture Hill or a hill a little nearer, an announcement was made in fluent Japanese: 'Japanese soldiers', the

voice said through a microphone, ‘the war has ended. Therefore, come back immediately. Throw away your weapons, strip yourself naked above your waist, and come forward to Pasture Hill. I am a true Japanese, although I am receiving US provisions. Those who are wounded and unable to move, make a smoke signal where you are. We will come to pick you up with a stretcher.’ The voice was definitely Japanese and calling us to surrender. ‘So and so of the navy, come back immediately. Is there so and so? If you are alive, come here immediately. You have fought very well. You have fulfilled your responsibilities. If you come back right now, we will send you back to Japan as soon as possible. Come back immediately!’

A similar announcement continued for up to two hours. However, because we had been shelled that very morning, we thought ‘We won’t fall into such a sweet trap!’, we did not take it seriously.

This announcement might have been just after noon on 15 August 1945 when Japan surrendered (Guam was one hour ahead of standard Japanese time). We just did not take it as credible. We simply kept wandering in the jungle as before, being afraid of US attacks.

The number of rainy days increased and mushrooms began to grow in the jungle. I had learnt in school that mushrooms which had a dirty colour, had a part of the stem split vertically and the back of its cap split, were edible; mushrooms which easily collapse into pieces or had bright colours were poisonous. Therefore, we did not suffer from food poisoning even when we cooked mushroom soup with coconut milk and toad meat. It reminded me of Japanese mushroom soup in Nagoya. We had difficulties on rainy days because wet footprints were easy to leave and hard to erase.

As we were living from hand to mouth in a group of seven and had no opportunity to relax, it was, not surprising that we became irritable at the most trivial things. One night in September 1945, when we went out to gather cycad nuts, Nihei scolded Minagawa. ‘What are you going to do without a (harvest) bag?’ Minagawa, who was following us with bare hands for no obvious reason, said, ‘What? Don’t you want to work with me?’ They fell into an argument for a while. ‘Unno, come with me.’ Minagawa and Unno went back. Nihei and Minagawa had not got on well with each other.

Minagawa, who was from Niigata prefecture used to work at tea-picking in Shizuoka prefecture, and became a friend of Unno from Shizuoka. Minagawa had no rifle but Unno had one. When we returned to our hut, they had both gone, having taken a pan belonging to Nihei, without even saying 'goodbye'. That was the last time I saw Unno in this world.

## CHAPTER 8

# ‘WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER’ (1946–1947)



We, the remaining five, were not in the right frame of mind to celebrate the new year of 1946, fearing US mopping-up operations and preoccupied with our subsistence. The Americans sang songs in a relaxed fashion when they patrolled the banks of the River Talofoto. Probably because they were too well provided for, they left behind lots of food, even some unopened cans of food, in places where they took rests. After they left, we picked up their leftovers and ate them. We felt utterly miserable and degraded doing so. But we had to eat.

Some remains of Japanese camping huts were seen here and there. They had been abandoned apparently under US pressure. It seemed that a substantial number of Japanese were still wandering in that area at that time. There was a hill of coconut shells and a pile of bones of a few cows. ‘After having created such a situation’, I thought, ‘it would be difficult to fail to be spotted.’

While we were scouting stealthily, we found the remains of the position of our Epidemic Control and Water Supply Squad. It appeared as if they had to run under the fire of a US mopping-up operation. A body was lying, deserted under a soldier’s blanket. We closed our eyes and prayed for him. Pans and outdoor rice cookers were scattered around. But the Americans had shot them through rendering them unusable.

There were a lot of things to eat around the area. We found it hard to leave and stayed there longer than expected. By that time, there had already been talk of separation among us.

It was a long time before we lost Nagao and the other two. ‘Mr Yokoi’, Nihei told me, ‘because Nagao has a lens, he shows us his power.’<sup>1</sup> I do not like it. Take his lens away. We shall then leave him, shall we?’

At that time, only the late Nagao and I possessed a lens. My lens was taken from a torchlight which generated electricity by clock-work. This torch was too heavy for me to carry, so I took its lens with me. It was single-sided. Therefore, on most occasions, we used the late Nagao’s double-sided lens to make a fire. I was thinking that unless every member of us had the means of making a fire, there would be a lot of conflict among us. I was thinking very seriously of doing something about this issue. However, while we had a lens, we all depended on it.

This time, ‘Shimizu and Nihei seem to be conspiring over something’, Shichi told me, ‘they may be going to desert us.’ ‘If they want to desert us’, I said, ‘what is wrong with that?’ Actually, there was some difficulty between Shimizu and me because we had been called up at the same time and I was made a section leader before him. There was also trouble between Nihei and Shichi, who were thereafter very fractious together. Under the circumstances, I was expecting our group to break-up. Soon thereafter, ‘If Shimizu and Nihei are planning to desert us’, Shichi suggested to me, ‘we shall desert them before they do. But I would like to take Nakahata with us.’ I followed his suggestion.

One day, when Shimizu, Nihei and Nakahata were taking their turn to travel some distance to gather jungle potatoes, Shichi advised Nakahata, ‘Turn back on the path by saying that you have left something behind.’ As for Shichi and I, we were taking our turn to look after our hut. We waited for Nakahata’s return, took our personal belongings and departed. Shichi left a note to Nihei, ‘We are taking this and that . . .’

The sun had set and we walked slowly within a patch of unfamiliar jungle. Fortunately, we came across a potato field. We were delighted to dig potatoes. We roasted them to eat, kept the fire smoking to deter mosquitoes, and laid down on the ground, using cycad leaves as fans. ‘How are Nihei and Shimizu doing?’ I kept thinking of them and was unable to sleep that night.

It was a journey without destination and we were attracted by the relatively good taste of jungle potatoes there. We stayed for several days. As we gradually grasped the geographical features of the area, it turned out to be a dangerous place. There was a patrol road nearby. Therefore, we hid ourselves on a banyan tree<sup>2</sup> by camouflaging ourselves with branches of creeping *pandanus*-like vines<sup>3</sup> during the daytime. We escaped onto the banyan tree just like monkeys being chased by hunters. At night, we came down from the banyan tree. One of us gathered potatoes, another water, the other firewood. We dug a hole at a suitable place to make a fire and boiled potatoes to eat. We searched for a place where we could live in peace and went to the upper reaches of the River Talofoyo.

The River Talofoyo was fed by a large number of tributaries upstream. I do not remember which of them we followed at that time. The further upstream, the less the food. We built a hut near one of the tributaries. At night, we went a long way down along the river to a banana plantation next door to the former station of our Epidemic Control and Water Supply Squad. One day, when Shichi was singing a song quietly, all of a sudden, 'bang . . . bang . . . rat-atat . . . bang . . .', we heard reports of gunfire, screams in Japanese and the noise of people running about. Next morning, we went to see what had happened and found a hut. A few Japanese seemed to have been attacked and had run away. 'This is Nihei's hut, isn't it?' I immediately recognized it as a certain type of hut designed by Nihei because of its uniquely tall structure. I missed Nihei so much that I looked around for him. But I never saw Nihei and Shimizu again in the jungle on Guam. After I returned to Japan, we were united again. They said that, fortunately, they returned to Japan separately in the course of the summer and autumn of 1946.

The day after the attack on Nihei, we heard for the second time, an announcement calling us to surrender. It was announced from the top of a high hill. 'A circular notice from the 29th Division Staff Officers Satō and Takeda', there were such introductory remarks, 'the 38th Regiment Sapper Corps, Warrant Officer Yamamoto; the Navy Reclamation Corps so and so; . . .' and 'Japanese soldiers', the announcement said, 'Japan has lost the war. All of you have worked enough. A spring will come to cause Japanese cherry blossoms to

bloom again. We shall go back to Japan to recover our strength for a new spring day, shan't we? Please come to a particular place under a flag on Pasture Hill. I am Lance Corporal Yamamoto of the 38th Regiment.'

The announcement was similar to this. The same man kept repeating the same announcement for about a week. However, we had experienced *their* tricky attacks employing a Japanese 'undercover' agent. American patrols kept firing machine-guns into the jungle in a totally indiscriminate fashion. Therefore, we were unable to take this kind of announcement at its face value: each one seemed to us to be another trap.

'Nihon-ichi, Fuji-yama, Fuji-yama', the man tested the microphone in Japanese, meaning, 'No. 1 in Japan, Mt Fuji.' 'I am truly Japanese', he also said. 'Cups of hot coffee are ready for you now. On such and such day of such and such month, a ship is sailing for Japan. Please come out immediately!' Warrant Officer Yamamoto of the Sappers, who was mentioned in the introductory part of the announcement, used to operate with our Inaba Platoon for a while and had set out for guerrilla warfare in the jungle from Pasture Hill. 'So and so of the so and so platoon', the announcement also named some specific individuals, 'are you listening?' Warrant Officer Yamamoto and I were not calling each other by name. He did not know my name. If he had known my name, he might have let my name be specifically called in his circular. However, we were only able to imagine that the man standing in front of the microphone, a Lance Corporal Yamamoto, either deserted his position or was taken a prisoner of war, and had become an agent of the US Army. The very content of the announcement was even more difficult to accept as genuine. If such senior officers as Staff Officers Satō and Takeda<sup>4</sup> had called us in person, we might have believed them. Why didn't they come forward to call us by themselves? If they had done so, even if I had not believed them, surely lots more Japanese would have come forward to Pasture Hill. I deeply regret this omission on the part of the very senior officers in this respect.

When we observed Pasture Hill from the top of a tree, there was a US flag flying behind the man speaking through the microphone. I was unable to believe any word of such a man. The man, a 'Lance

Corporal Yamamoto', always sang 'Kantarō's Moonlight Song' at the end of each announcement. It was a popular song with which we became familiar when we were in Manchuria. In the army, however, we were strictly prohibited from singing any popular song. This was one of the reasons which made us even more suspicious.

Shichi, Nakahata and I, therefore, remained wanderers in the jungle as before. We calculated the passing of time by observing the moon and stars. The waxing and waning of the moon told us months and days. Stars told us hours. The Southern Cross, the Great Bear, and the Orion which we called 'Private Superior Stars' because three stars formed a line and shone brightly like the insignia of a private superior, were particularly conspicuous. When we watched from raised ground, celestial objects formed a perfect semi-sphere from the horizon and I was able to observe every segment of it. The stars were so bright<sup>5</sup> that I occasionally misidentified the torchlight of US patrols thinking it starlight and endangered my life. Still, the angles of stars and the rising and the setting of the sun gave us some clue about the time as well as the seasons.

In order to escape from the enemy, we hid behind a thick reed-bed on the banks of a tributary stream of the River Talofoto and camped there for a few days. Suddenly, Nakahata developed a fever. When Shichi and I went to 'requisition' food (in other words, 'search for'), it began to rain. We hurried back and pitched a tent and put a cloth over Nakahata. We thought that we had to move the ill Nakahata to a safer place. Although we thought it rather harsh to leave the suffering patient alone, we had to go scouting the geography of a patch of jungle in front of us. We found a suitable place. It was about sixty yards within the jungle located almost at the top of the hill. The jungle was surrounded by foxtail grasses. There were three or four banyan trees in a line. A number of *pandanus*-like vines grew densely in the area so that visibility was extremely poor.

Shichi and I felled some *pago* (hibiscus) trees near a river, built the framework of a hut, gathered foxtail grasses to thatch a roof, and made a floor from the betel palm trees. We also built an entrance and an open hearth. Thoroughly soaked in sweat, we worked until the evening to build a hut. We dragged our feet wearily to the place where we left Nakahata alone. We lit a cord as a wick as a substitute

for a torch, and went to gather water and firewood to prepare a simple meal. Although we had a cloth tent over our heads, it kept pouring and the water flowed along the ground from the hill. Consequently, we were unable to lie down to sleep. Not only Shichi and I, but also the ill Nakahata has to remain sitting on a wooden stand. A large swarm of mosquitoes ruthlessly attacked us. As we were so tired, we became very sleepy. However, as I had to look after the fire on the cord wick lest it be extinguished in the rain, I was unable to sleep. Lamenting over the uncertainty of our life, I kept dozing while sitting on the stand throughout the night.

Fortunately, at daybreak it stopped raining. We had to make sure not to leave any trace of our camp at that place. We hid our household utensils, as we were unable to carry them all at one time, at the bottom of a tree and behind grasses. Shichi and I carried as much as we could, and proceeded towards our new hut slowly and cautiously, erasing our footprints as we went and taking care of the ill Nakahata. Thus, it was already about noon when we had journeyed all the way to our new hut which we had built the day before. All these activities put too much strain on the ill Nakahata and his temperature soared. 'Urgh . . . Urgh . . .' He groaned. Even so, we had no medicine. We were only able to keep him lying quietly and cool his head. Shichi and I looked after him and searched for food in turn. We had a hard time. After a week or so, his temperature went down and he gradually recovered. The atmosphere of our hut brightened and we were relieved.

At that time, all we had in our possession were four portable rice-cookers, two kettles, one aluminium tray and five water bottles. We cut in half one of the water bottles and fixed a handle to it, using it as a frying pan. We also broke one of our bayonets into two pieces, and burnished its sharp-pointed part with a stone to use it as a kitchen knife. We used the other part with a handle as a cold chisel to cut a piece of metal. We had a broken manual meat mincer which we had picked up from the remains of our Epidemic Control and Water Supply Squad. We repaired and adjusted it to use it as a dredger. We also had some local spades and hoes which the natives called 'chagala'; an instrument to open a coconut kernel, which was also used by the natives; and six steel boxes which were presumably

US cartridge boxes. We bundled these boxes together to carry water. During the daytime, we hid these utensils in trees and behind grasses nearby and did not leave anything inside our hut in case a US mopping-up operation stormed us.

In the meantime, the strong, youthful Nakahata was put in charge of carrying water; Shichi, who was good at cooking, was put in charge of cooking; and I gathering firewood. We divided labour to match each of our strengths. We acted together when we went out hunting or gathering in a remote place.

One day, 'because the situation has been good', we discussed, 'we shall eat something new, shall we?' 'Squad Leader', Shichi and Nakahata said, 'we will go and have a look around'.

Around half past three in the afternoon, the two set out in the hope of finding a pig in the upper reaches of the River Talofofu. It was some time before sunset, but so long as we took sufficient care, walking in the jungle was reasonably safe. I was listening carefully for the sound of gunfire; 'bang . . .', I heard one gunshot and thought, 'they have done it'. If the enemy fired, there would be far more than a single gunshot and I could hear dogs barking and men talking. 'Squad Leader', Nakahata came back panting with exertion, 'we have got a big pig, but she is too heavy to carry. We need a pan, baskets and containers.' Nakahata and I took these items and hurried there straight away. Shichi, Nakahata and I carried the pig intact up to a river. But she was too heavy to carry while crossing the river, so we laid down *pandanus* leaves on the riverside and chopped the pig into pieces on the leaves. We separated the pig's limbs and washed her internal organs. The most pitiful thing was that there were three piglets within her womb. They were soon to be born, but we killed them because of the war. We felt sorry for the piglets. I closed my eyes, prayed 'Namu Amidabutsu'<sup>6</sup> and told them in my mind, 'When you are born into this world again, be born as humans.'<sup>7</sup>

We carried pieces of pork on our backs and pushed our way through the jungle step by step. Our load was so heavy that we were unable to walk as fast as we wanted. 'Look! The sun is already setting in the west!' I began to worry about the live charcoals in the hearth of our hut. I sent Nakahata, who was small, young and strong, to take care of our hearth. Shichi and I shared his load

between the two of us. We walked slowly forward. However, Nakahata lost his way after sunset. We reached our hut before him.

Before we left the hut, I buried a large piece of the hard *lemonchina* (lime berry) wood and a coconut shell beneath the ashes of the hearth with some live charcoals. But the coconut shell did not burn well and the *lemonchina* wood was too fresh to catch fire. 'Goodness me!' I churned the ashes with my hand, although the ashes were still almost too hot to touch. 'Oh my God',<sup>8</sup> I prayed, 'please help us. Give us a fire, please'.

A small soya-bean-sized piece of incandescent charcoal was then located in the ashes. It was an ember of the fire which we had made the previous morning. The incandescent charcoals could not survive so long in fresh air. I put this almost dying fire to a cord wick in a hurry. The fire was secured. We had no time to take a rest. We had to cook the pork before sunrise, because the temperature was so high that the pork would turn rotten very quickly, rendering all of our toil and perspiration useless. So, we divided the work among us. We illuminated our hut with a few palm oil lumps. We laid down *pandanus* leaves on the floor. Shichi and I removed the skin and concentrated on separating the pork from the bones. Since we were inexperienced at this sort of thing, we had little know-how. Our knives were so blunt that we tended to put too much force in our arms, risking injuring our own hands. Nakahata placed the chopped pieces of pork neatly one after the other on a square aluminium tray, and roasted them until they became hard and crisp lest they turned rotten. When we finally finished the cooking, it was already dawn.

We set about cleaning up immediately. During daylight we went across the river to clean the area where we cut up the pig to carry it. We sorted out the mess we had left in the reed-bed, lifting up the grass stalks which we had trampled down. This was hard work and we spent much longer than we had expected. It was a little past ten in the morning when we came back to our hut. Although we had some leftovers from the previous night for our breakfast, we were too exhausted and sleepy to have much appetite. We therefore removed our belongings from the hut and hid them nearby, laid down on a dense foxtail grass field over the hill and slept deeply.

The pork, which we had obtained after so much effort and hard

work, to our disappointment, became merely four pints in volume per person once roasted. The pork was utterly tasteless. 'If only we had a spoonful of salt', we painfully yearned for salt, 'we want salt!' We warmed the skin, shaved the hair, washed the skin and dried it to eat. It was not particularly tasty. We sun-dried pieces of pork, which we had roasted overnight by hanging them with laces made from the *pago* fibres. However, thousands of bluebottle flies collected on the pork pieces from around the hut or indeed from everywhere. The eggs of the bluebottle flies formed into maggots in less than ten minutes. They ate deeply into the pork. We had either to remove or to roast again those parts of the pork where bluebottle flies had laid their eggs, in order that we could retain the pork as dried food.

The weather was fine, so we made our way deep into the jungle. We found a lot of breadfruit trees and a herd of some twenty to thirty pigs. However, we had to give up shooting at the pigs for security reasons. We climbed up a banyan tree and found a bamboo thicket. Then, the noise of dogs barking and gun shots was carried from that direction to us. We could see some twenty to thirty men running about. We hastily hid our belongings and climbed up the banyan tree again and camouflaged ourselves with branches of *pandanus*-like vines. We could reconnoitre the situation from there, and watched the men gradually approaching us – who then fired bullets at their prey from a hill right into our piece of jungle. 'Bang . . . bang . . .' They seemed to be carrying out a mopping-up operation on the assumption that some Japanese were hiding themselves right here.

'We shall never fall under the bullets of such local native soldiers.'

We grabbed our rifles and exchanged eye-contact to encourage each other.

'We shall show them the last stand of the Japanese.'

However, we were unable to act as we liked on tree branches. The cruel high summer sun shone over our heads and we almost lost consciousness. When we found the blazing sun, long silence, hunger and thirst no longer tolerable, and longed for water, 'good heavens!' the sky suddenly became overcast and a squall of rain poured intensively with a loud noise for a short period of time. We recovered from the thirst, breathed a sigh of relief and gave thanks for the squall. As we considered our situation, the sun was already setting in

the west and the natives seemed to have gone home after being called 'Oy! Oy!' from near their village. We rejoiced in our safety and slid down from the trees. As we walked from the hill to the bamboo thicket, we found a beautiful river and beds of stone. We stripped ourselves and jumped into the river like children.

We had not washed our bodies and clothes for days, so we bathed and washed our clothes in the river. 'Swish-swosh . . . swish-swosh . . .', as we were washing our clothes while naked in the river, something pricked our bare backs. We put out our hands softly to each other's back. Small blackish things were pricking, 'clip . . . clip . . .' We examined them carefully under the starlight and discovered that they were big river shrimps. We tried to catch them by hand. They jumped away. We managed to capture two of them, peeled off their shells and ate them raw. They were very delicious. I still remember how tasty they were.

When we finished washing, we realized that we were very hungry. It was, however, too dark to do anything. Inevitably, I had to ask Nakahata to climb up a palm tree to drop three green coconuts, and gathered them under starlight. We also hung our wet clothes around us and made a fire behind the clothes lest its light be seen from outside. We drank coconut milk and baked ripe but hard kernels to ease our hunger. We laid down green leaves of palm and betel palm trees and slept on them. Because we had bathed for the first time after a long time, we felt so comfortable and so tired that we fell into a deep sleep in spite of attacks by mosquitoes and ants. Although none of us took care of the fire in the meantime, strangely enough, a few incandescent charcoals still remained next morning.

We stayed there for a few days and saw what happened. Nothing happened. We eventually went back as we began to worry about our hut. However, we lost our way and were without food. Dark cloud seemed to envelop the sky and we were unable to see even a foot ahead of us. Therefore, we groped about to gather withered wood and made a small fire to deter mosquitoes by smoke. We sat with our backs leaning against a tree to take a nap. Around daybreak, we heard the voices of natives and bangs of gunfire near the bank of the River Talofofo where we used to be. We were alarmed, sorted

out the mess around us and frantically searched about for a safe place to hide ourselves.

As there was a broad swath of reeds near us, we winked to each other to hide ourselves deep within it. The first one of us, carrying a lighter load than the rest, made his way through in front; the second carried a load for two men; and the last cleared up everything behind us so as not to be detected by the enemy. In this way, we pushed our way through the swath of reeds which were much taller than we were.

The bangs of gunfire gradually intensified. We estimated that the bangs were from a riverside banana plantation where a herd of cows had been seen. It seemed that some Japanese looted the plantation and were detected and raided. 'May they have noticed the raid in advance', I prayed for them, 'and escaped without any casualties.' The gunfire continued until two o'clock in the afternoon. There was still no sign of the enemy leaving. We were vigilantly locked in there until evening, because we feared that the enemy might pass us by on their way home.

We thus spent another day without eating and drinking. We took a nap hungrily while making smoke to deter the mosquitoes. I felt it thoroughly painful to live. I began to think it better to die than to live under such miserable circumstances.

In the evening, a group of native soldiers returned home while talking to each other on a road opposite to us. It seemed that we were experiencing the mopping-up operation for the umpteenth time. We had to be vigilant. We encouraged each other, groping to handle a cord wick to make anti-mosquito smoke, and passed the night. Although we were exhausted, we were too agitated by the mopping-up operation to sleep.

Early next morning, we checked our position from a tree top and forced our way through the trackless tract of land. We sorted out the mess behind us only at the entrance and the exit of our passage through the grassy areas, leaving the middle remaining crumpled. We proceeded towards our hut vigilantly, swiftly and single-mindedly.

We reached our hut at about ten o'clock in the morning. The hut was damp and mouldy all over. It had been further ravaged by field mice throughout. It was full of dung everywhere. There was no space for us to sit down. We had to start sorting out the mess somewhere, but it was difficult to decide where to start.

‘We are still lucky’, we comforted each other, ‘not to have been killed.’ We cleaned the hut without uttering a word. All that we were able to do was to cook some coconut milk and papaya gruel. As we could not make a fire during the daytime, there was no way but to cook with reserve charcoal.

Thereafter, nothing happened and we lived in peace for a while. However, the mopping-up operation eventually reached our place. One day, we heard some natives talking and dogs barking some one hundred yards down on the right, so we hid our household items and ourselves in foxtail grass in a hurry and listened carefully. However, we heard no noise thereafter and were unable to ascertain where the natives had gone. At dusk, each of us carried a live cord wick and searched for the place where the voices had been heard. We were able to estimate how many people were participating in the mopping-up operation by examining the footprints and the mess in the grass fields on the spot where the voices and the barking had been heard. Each of us carefully searched the area and found that they were unexpectedly small in number. A few men and a few dogs seemed to have gone upstream to search for us from around a banyan tree on the other side of the river.

‘They must be agents of US special patrols,’ we suggested. ‘We do not need to worry too much about them.’ Still, in order to minimize our risk, we agreed that we had to find a safer place to live.

The more readily food was available, the more enemy attention. Hence we had to live far away from food sources to ensure our security. ‘Security first. Food second.’ We persuaded ourselves to be patient and put up with some such inconveniences in order to wait for the Japanese army to come and rescue us.

I spoke as follows:

Beasts live without salt by eating seeds and roots of plants. Even the lord of all creation is physically the same as beasts. Therefore, we shall be able to survive with our wisdom even without any possessions. So long as we do not desire any better standard of living, there will be less chance of being detected by the enemy, will there?’ ‘Let us go.’

We grabbed each other’s hand and went deeper into the jungle.

## CHAPTER 9

# ‘I SHALL SURVIVE ON MY OWN’ (1948)



I think that it was about the beginning of 1948. One night, we went across a hill in the dusk and hid ourselves among reeds on a river bank. We waited there until daybreak in order to search for a reasonable place to build a hut. We then came to a banyan tree where we once took a rest a long time ago. There was a foxtail grass field opposite the banyan tree and there was no sign of anyone passing through it. This area seemed to be a suitable place to locate our hut. So we decided to build it at the corner of the jungle on the river bank covered with dense foxtail grasses because the enemy would find it difficult to detect. We thought that as long as we made sure we erased our footprints, even if something unexpected happened during the daytime, we could hide ourselves within the dense reeds to protect ourselves from the enemy.

There were many *pago*<sup>1</sup> (hibiscus) trees in the area because it was near a river, and we selected large ones to build a strong hut. However, we had to fell the trees without making any noise. We had no saw. Only an old half-broken tribal machete was available for us. It was a back-breaking business felling a tree with such a tool by literally scratching the tree little by little. Besides, we had to cut branches and leaves into small pieces to bury them at the roots of the reeds lest the enemy detect our activities. We were only able to work either in the early morning or at night. We also needed to gather or hunt something to eat. Therefore, it was very time-consuming. Fortunately, the weather was fine so we were able to

build the framework of a hut within about three nights. In the meantime, we slept in the open air within the reeds.

In the morning, we then thatched a roof with foxtail grasses, made the square framework of an open hearth, and knitted foxtail grasses to make a blind instead of a wall. Finally, with much relief, it was possible to take a rest inside the new hut. But there was no floor<sup>2</sup> yet, and the hut was built on a slope. Inevitably, we slept within the leftovers of those foxtails grasses which we had used, as if we were dogs or pigs.

The remaining question was what sort of wood we should use to make the floor. *Pago* (hibiscus) trees were so small that we would need to fell a great number of them. Bamboos were only available from a distant location. The betel palm tree was the most suitable one to make a floor, but it was the hardest tree to fell. Even so, there was no choice but to fell it. One of us held and waved a cord wick to illuminate the area; another climbed up a tall tree to keep watch in the vicinity; and the third felled a betel palm tree. Nakahata, a good tree-climber, assumed the task of sentry. Shichi and I assumed alternately the task of holding a wick light and that of felling. We gradually curved around the tree little by little while making sure that we made no noise. We had to calculate the direction of felling the tree to ease the work that followed. It was very hard work indeed.

We laboured all night long to fell a couple of betel palm trees. We cut each of them into three pieces of suitable lengths. As the dawn light revealed our situation within the reed thicket to us, we cut their upper branches and leaves into small pieces to make it easier to bury them lest the enemy detect our activities. We then sliced each piece of wood vertically into six pieces and removed the off-cuts to make them into timbers. One of us carried the main timber back to our hut; another went to hide the off-cuts within the reed thicket. We had to carry out these tasks at great speed so that we were soaked in sweat. We also had to sort out the mess after the felling. We pulled away or lifted up some knocked down shrubs; placed some leaves to cover the earth; and sprinkled water from puddles over the leaves. The problem was the two fresh stumps jutting out from the ground. We covered the stumps with earth and moss. Still, we were afraid

that deer or some other animal might kick these stumps, remove the earth and moss cover on them and expose evidence of our presence to the eyes of our enemy. Therefore, we were compelled to place a large dead piece of wood on each of the stumps with great difficulty.

Even then, it was important to keep patrolling the area from time to time to see if anything unusual was happening. If we did not pay such meticulous attention, we thought, we could not possibly escape our enemy's notice and survive to win the final victory. We were therefore very cautious.

In this way, we managed to gather the necessary timbers for the flooring. We sat on a pile of timbers with a sigh of relief. As we were hungry, we ate our breakfast quickly. We then lay on the ground and sank into deep sleep.

We woke up in the early evening. We then reluctantly began to fit the timbers together to make a floor while still rubbing our eyes. I asked Nakahata to gather some dead coconuts while I myself sawed and planed the timbers with Shichi into floor boards, although we were unable to do the job as neatly as we wished. Thereafter, Shichi prepared dinner, while I put up some fences around the floor space like walls to prevent our firelight from being seen from outside. The dead coconuts, which Nakahata had gathered, could still be eaten, while their shells could be burnt to make smoke to deter mosquitoes effectively. We had dinner while deterring mosquitoes. By that time, stars shone throughout the night sky. We were fascinated to see them. The night was so quiet and peaceful that we almost forgot that the enemy was after us.

That night, we were able to relax, stretching our arms and legs on the new floor which we had fitted with a great deal of effort. We felt quite at home in this small but enjoyable hut. For the first time after a long while, we talked to each other on a variety of topics before falling asleep.

However, a strange noise woke me up in the middle of the night. As I cautiously went out to see what it was, something approached me with a rustling noise through the reed thicket. I was alarmed, fearing our enemy's patrol, and shook my two colleagues out of their sleep. We ran out of our hut quietly and reconnoitred the

situation. However, the source of the rustling gradually went away from us towards the river downstream from us. 'Perhaps', Shichi said, 'some Japanese have gone astray.' 'Well', we said, 'it is strange for them to wander about so late at night . . .' Next morning, we went down to the river to see what had happened and found some footprints. As some reed shoots had been eaten, we realized with a sense of relief that it was deer which had frightened us the previous night.

We spent a relatively peaceful period there and put together some food stocks. So one day, we went out to explore some unfamiliar places.

We walked through the jungle aiming at a bamboo thicket as our first destination. However, there was a very extensive swath of reeds on the bank of the river so that it was difficult to cross it. At the point where we managed to cross it, we had reached a river bank far upstream from the intended bamboo thicket. There were still plenty of cycad nuts. We waited until twilight hiding ourselves within the reeds. Suddenly, we came under heavy, indiscriminate shell-fire launched from the direction of Agat, apparently a part of the mopping-up operation. We heard the crump . . . crump . . . of shell-fire. Shells flew over our heads and we expected death at any moment. As they were shelling at a comparatively tall lauan tree, we hid ourselves beneath some lower hibiscus trees to outlast events. The shelling continued from morning until evening. It only stopped for an hour during lunch time.

In the evening, after the cessation of the shell-fire, we went through a ditch towards the east. We saw a fire right below a hill top. 'How strange', we thought, 'are some Japanese cooking up there?' As we were feeling lonely, we inadvertently shouted 'Oy!' at the fire in Japanese and approached it. No one was visible there. There was a fire at one spot. The entire area had its grasses burnt to ashes. A stump had caught fire and was still burning. We then realized that we had misidentified this fire to be a cooking fire of some Japanese. As it turned out, the natives had set fire to the foxtail grasses here. 'If the natives had still been around, we would have been finished', we thought. We regretted our stupidity in calling out so loudly.

We then went to the river and bathed ourselves on beds of stone.

When we happened to look further upstream, some black things lay on a stone. Under such circumstances, the only thought which immediately came to our mind was: 'Some Japanese had come to this river to catch shrimps and were killed. What a pity!' We approached the black items. After careful examination, they turned out to be three bamboo baskets for catching shrimps. 'These baskets were probably set by Japanese soldiers', we speculated, 'and their presence had been noticed by the natives who patrolled the area near the river. As they were unable to find any Japanese, they set fire to the nearby foxtail grasses.' Everyone was inexperienced in living under such circumstances. It was very easy to be spotted and pursued. We wanted to take these baskets. But at the same time, we did not want the natives to become aware of our presence. Therefore, we left the baskets as they were.

We bathed and refreshed ourselves and comfortably climbed up a hill. When we reached a corner of the hill we looked below, there was a village, presumably Inarajan. The village was brightly lit. Unlike under Japanese rule, it looked like a large city. We heard babies crying, dogs barking and hens clucking. The moon shone beautifully illuminating the surface of the sea. The scene was so melancholic, beautiful and quiet that we were caught in nostalgia for Japan. 'Had there not been war', we murmured, 'we, too, would be living peacefully with our own families like them!' We, however, suppressed our rising emotions. As we were trudging wearily, all of a sudden, we saw a bright light about the size of a headlight of a car ahead of us. Alarmed, we threw ourselves flat down on the ground.

There were many lights, some bright, some dim, moving to and fro. 'Perhaps', I thought almost by intuition, 'some Japanese are looking for something which they have left behind?' We talked to each other to conclude that no such light could possibly be available to Japanese soldiers. The worst scenario, we imagined, would be that our enemy was operating at night. We kept lying face down on the ground for the moment, scrutinizing the situation. We then stealthily crawled sidewise in the opposite direction to our own hut.

Shichi insisted that we should hide ourselves behind the nearby clump of reeds. I suggested that we should hide ourselves in the patch of jungle beyond the clump of reeds because the enemy

patrols might illuminate the clump from the hill top to try and find us. They agreed with me in the end. As we walked frantically into the jungle, we reached the bank of a large pond. It seemed to be a breeding ground for frogs as tens of thousands of tadpoles and frogs collected there. There was also a fruit tree called 'alligator pear' which was about the same size and shape as a flat Japanese persimmon.<sup>3</sup> I picked up a fruit, still green, peeled its rind and ate it. It smelt of pine resin and was hardly edible yet. There were also a few soursop<sup>4</sup> trees but still without any fruit. So we ate hard coconut kernels uncooked just to ease our pangs of hunger and hid ourselves behind weeds on the pond bank and waited quietly for sunset.

In the early evening, we went out towards the pond slightly earlier and each of us caught about ten frogs. We also picked some green breadfruits from their trees. We roasted them to eat. Green breadfruits tasted like grilled aubergines. Roast frogs tasted like grilled fish. However, we had neither salt nor soy source. We just eased our hunger.

Because of the rain, the ground was wet and soggy. We were unable to lie down on it. We lay some dead breadfruit leaves on the ground to sit on. Since it was too dangerous to make a fire for security reasons, we only made smoke. I realized that my foot was itching. Look! There was a round black creature about 0.2 inch (5 mm) in diameter thrusting its mouth and teeth deep into my skin and sucking my blood!<sup>5</sup> As I pulled it out of my foot, its body came off while its head remained intact in my skin, and still kept sucking my blood. Its poison remained in my foot, and the itchiness lingered on for quite a long time thereafter. We had been physically exhausted since the night before. However, as we began falling asleep, gracefully, a large swarm of mosquitoes assaulted us. Each of us kept fanning them away with a betel palm leaf until daybreak.

Early next morning, we left there. The frogs there were particularly palatable. However, we were afraid of enemy patrols. We picked some papayas to eat on the way. We caught a delicious aroma then and there. As we looked around, there was a fruit tree, which was the same species as that which I saw when I was deployed in Southern China (in 1938). It had a lot of fruit on it. As none of us knew its real name,<sup>6</sup> we called its fruit 'belch'. It tasted like a plum,

its horizontal section was shaped like a star, it was 3 inches (7–8 cm) in length and about 1.9 inches (5 cm) in diameter, and reddish yellow in colour. When we ate too much of this fruit, we belched afterwards, so we called it 'belch'.

'Clunk . . . clunk . . .' 'Hoi! Hoi!' Suddenly, the noise of beating a piece of wood as well as the lively voice of the natives came nearer and nearer to us. 'Patrols! Hide ourselves somewhere!' We immediately jumped into a foxtail grove in the centre of the jungle. Unlike the other places, its ground was dry, so we lay on our backs on the grasses and strained our ears to listen for the sound of their foot-steps. 'They do not seem to be coming here today.' We realized that their voices turned from the east to the south and faded away. Still, we were unable to lower our guard. There were more than a few groups of patrols so we had to be vigilant for a while. However, it had become quiet and we found nothing unusual in the area. So we cautiously came out. As we went down, we came upon a river. We walked along the bank of the river and reached a place which commanded a wide view. Some empty cans of food, paper bags and so on were scattered there, suggesting clearly that a patrol group had eaten lunch there that day or the day before.

Like beggars, we picked up cigarette ends, matches, and even some empty cans. We washed our faces and hands in the river. As we tried to cross the river, we realized that some shrimps were creeping and following us on the stone river bed there. How wonderful! We thankfully captured them and ate them as they were. 'We wish we could live here in a leisurely way and survive by fishing!' It was actually too dangerous to stay there too long. So, we left quickly with great regret.

At last, it became dark. As we walked five or six hundred yards (metres) from the river, there was a sudden clinking noise. We stopped walking and tried to determine the source of the noise in vain. In the meantime, 'aagh . . . aagh . . .' we felt we heard some human beings groaning.

We sensed danger. Unable to move forwards or backwards, we fell on our bottoms. Wondering about the source of the groaning noise, we ate the enemy's leftovers which we had picked up earlier and saw what had happened. The same noise kept being repeated

for a long time so we opined that bamboo leaves were rubbing against each other. As we went to examine the phenomenon, we were relieved to find that the 'aagh . . . aagh . . .' sound was actually the noise of bamboo stems rubbing against each other.

As it was completely dark, we decided to sleep where we were. We groped in the dark to make smoke to deter mosquitoes and slept on the grass. However, the noise of the bamboo stems rubbing against each other disturbed us. In addition, it was hard to sleep on the grass. We kept tossing and turning, and were unable to sleep well despite the fact that we had not slept well the previous night.

At dawn, we quietly lifted up the grass on which we had laid during the night, and went deeper into the bamboo thicket. The thicket was larger than we thought the night before. A lot of bamboo shoots greeted us here and there as if they were inviting us to eat them.

However, the bamboo shoots on Guam were different from Japan's and were too tough and bitter to eat without boiling. A baby black shoot which had grown less than six inches from the subterranean stem could be eaten in its entirety. A shoot which had grown more could not be eaten except for its tender top six inches or less. As we looked around the thicket, there were some soursop trees near a river. There were several ripe soursop fruits which looked very tasty, and many more still young fruits on the trees. We wanted to take some ripe fruits. However, the enemy might be keeping their eyes on these trees. Therefore, we resisted our appetite and went straight on further, deeper within the thicket. This bamboo thicket was about 100 yards (metres) in width, and two or three hundred yards (metres) in depth. A Japanese bamboo thicket would spread indefinitely, whereas bamboo thickets on Guam were dotted around keeping some distance between each other.

As we needed coconuts, we proceeded towards a palm plantation seen from a distance. We came across a path about one foot (30 cm) wide on the way. It seemed that the enemy patrols passed along the path frequently. There were lots of matches and cigarette ends on the path. As the path was obviously dangerous, we tried to take a side track. However, lots of densely grown trees blocked our way

through. On that day, too, we found some soursop fruit here and there emitting sweet smells. We were so afraid of being spotted by the enemy that we grudgingly passed by the soursops without taking any.

When we had travelled all the way to our destination, the palm plantation, there was a pile of coconuts on the ground. A palm stem was thrust on the pile. Some of the green coconuts were cut open and eaten, presumably by the natives. It was obvious that some enemy patrols stopped at this place. It was too dangerous to touch any of the coconuts. While we were struck by bitter disappointment, we heard people chatting and approaching from downstream. We quietly retreated upstream and entered a shrub on a cliff on the river bank to see what happened.

The native local soldiers failed to notice us and went far away. However, as the sun was still high up in the sky, we cautiously kept hiding there and waited for darkness. After sunset, in the starlight, we crossed the river and went homewards, towards our hut. When we came back to the first bamboo thicket near our hut, we took some coconuts from the top of a palm tree, drank coconut milk and ate the nuts without cooking them. We kept walking throughout the night. When it became bright, we hid ourselves behind foxtail grasses on the side of the bamboo thicket. We were exhausted and sank into a deep sleep.

That place was deep within a grass field and there was no trace of any man ever having passed through. It was quite a sunny place and the ground was dry. Therefore, it was very comfortable for us to sleep there. We woke up around noon. As the situation seemed to be favourable, we pushed our way through a patch of jungle to search for food. Look! A herd of pigs has run into us. As such wonderful animals had been presented to us, we thought over how to capture them. It was unwise to allow the noise of a gunshot. But how to get hold of them without making noise? We decided to make a cage trap. We picked up some wire from the barbed-wire fence of a former Japanese stock farm, spread the wire across a number of trees in the jungle to make a cage, and placed some bait inside. The door of the cage was designed to shut as soon as a pig took the bait.

In the evening, we placed some bait inside. We observed the

situation from behind trees. At night, a pig came and ate the bait as we planned. However, the pig was unexpectedly strong and quickly pulled up the wire to escape from below it. We were thoroughly disappointed. Our efforts proved useless and left us feeling tired.

We then decided to make a net to catch pigs. We felled *pago* (hibiscus) trees to make ropes from their bark. We made a net from these *pago* ropes. We made two nets, each 30 feet (9 metres) long and 3 feet (1 metre) wide. We combined the two to make a bag, and fitted a solid entrance made of bamboo. The idea was to make a large rat trap. At night, we placed several breadfruits inside the bag and from a distance waited to see if anything happened. 'Coo! Coo!' Deer arrived, making nasal sounds, and ate the bait. 'Clang!' As soon as we heard the door shutting, we jumped out to catch the deer. However, in less than no time, the deer bit off the *pago* ropes and ran away.

Another disappointment. Twice we saw our prey defeating our traps. We, the three human beings, were then competing with the animals for cleverness. We dug a shallow hole, fitted a rope to a net and contrived for the net to fall upon the hole as soon as some game fell into the hole. We waited stealthily and quietly for some game to come, enduring incessant mosquito bites and sleepiness. However, neither a pig nor deer nor anything ever turned up. Suspecting that something might be wrong with our trap, we patiently waited for three days and three nights. In the end, we waited in vain.

After we failed for the third time, we felt we must give up. These failures after a series of laborious attempts, we thought, had revealed the will of God in Heaven that we should not kill living animals. As the truth had been so revealed,<sup>7</sup> we gave up our lust for game, and led a meagre life subsisting on food which was naturally available to us.

At that time, we were still young and strong. On a rainy day, 'If the Japanese army comes back and gets us back to Japan', we talked in a small voice in our hut, 'we should make some money before going home.' We agreed together that the best way to make money here would be through a food business. 'This is tasty', 'That is better.' We counted our chickens before they were hatched. We sometimes talked in an enthusiastic way about money-making.

One night, as we walked down to a river bank nearby, we found some water potatoes. We took some of them as a substitute for vegetables. The water potato grew, like the Japanese yam potato, in water.<sup>8</sup> When it was boiled, it tasted sweet like chestnuts which had been boiled together. Its leaves were also edible but sometimes had unpalatable toughness. In fact, the water potato came in different varieties, distinguishable by the colour of their creeping stems: purple, flesh-colour and green. The purple variety had the strong unpalatable toughness in its leaves and stems, but its potatoes were delicious. The flesh-colour variety had little toughness in its leaves and stems, but its potatoes were elongated and not tasty. The green variety's leaves and stems were edible, but its potatoes were too dry and hard to eat. The natives cultivated the purple variety in their marshland and farms.

It was early one morning in a period when it kept raining and we kept eating only coconuts and water potatoes, and were in need of some meat. We saw a herd of pigs running in the jungle. Because it was still very early in the morning and raining, we were determined to capture them at any cost. We ran after the pigs with rifles and selected a suitable spot where little noise could reach our enemy. We ambushed the pigs there when they came down to a valley. We beheaded a pig; cut it into pieces on the spot; put the pieces into three rucksacks made from knitted *pago* threads; and carried them on our backs. Our backs were covered with the drops of blood from the pig. We were also soaked to the skin by the rain. When we returned to our hut, it was already noon.

The water level of the river had risen up to right beneath our hut. We threw the pork on the floor and chopped it up. The floor was covered with blood. Due to the rain, the firewood was damp, and did not burn well. We roasted the pork on our square aluminium tray. The roasting continued throughout the night, but still half the pork remained to be roasted at dawn. Due to the high temperature, an uncountable number of bluebottle flies settled on the pork to lay eggs as if a splattering of rice was sprayed on it. The eggs became maggots and in about ten minutes began to move. We regretted our inability to make a fire during the daytime to keep roasting the pork to prevent it from rotting. We lamented and went

to wash the raw pork in the river. The maggots were then drowned and floated on the water's surface one after another. Thus, we succeeded in getting rid of the maggots on the pork very easily. To our delight, we had become cleverer than before!

We were hardly able to wait for the night before resuming cooking. As the rain kept pouring continuously, we had no dry firewood. Therefore, we stripped off our floor boards which we had fitted with great difficulty, and burnt them to roast the pork, single-mindedly with lots of sweat. We distributed pieces of the roast pork evenly among us to store them in each one's basket.

Although we had taken meticulous care in the distribution of foodstuffs, various areas of discontent had developed among us about food which had matured over a long period of time. A rift had developed in our thinking.

One evening, when I came back from my turn at requisitioning food, I found our hut empty but for a piece of paper. Because Shichi was a medic, he wrote in mercurochrome as a substitute for ink, on a piece of wrapping paper which a US soldier had thrown away and which had been picked up by Shichi. 'Nakahata and I are leaving here', the letter read, 'but we will get in contact with you on new year's day.'

I was terribly upset and desperately searched around for them. I was unable to find either of them. I remember that this happened probably after autumn and towards the end of December 1948.

## CHAPTER 10

# TAILORING FROM TREE FIBRES ‘THE EMPIRE WILL STRIKE BACK IN A DECADE’ (1949 – 1950)



I was so unexpectedly rendered alone that I suddenly felt utterly desolate. Shichi and Nakahata had disappeared, I thought, in accordance with a premeditated plan, having waited for my turn to go in search of food in the jungle. ‘I shall never give up’; I determined in my mind to survive on my own and to wait for Japanese reinforcements.

Day after day, I quietly survived on my own, searching for food while taking care not to be spotted by the enemy.

A week after their disappearance, on new year’s day 1949, Shichi and Nakahata kept their promise and visited me with special food. They brought me a substitute for a traditional Japanese recipe to celebrate the new year: *mochi* (rice cake) soup. They had made a square *mochi* cake from jungle potatoes and cycad powder. They made a fire in the nearby foxtail grasses to warm the soup and placed two red river shrimps and some green leaves of water potatoes on the *mochi* cake to serve me. They brought with them for themselves some jungle potatoes and bananas boiled in stock made from toads.

I had harboured resentment against them since they had deserted and left me alone. However, they visited me to treat me to special food in order to celebrate the new year together. My arms trembled as I received the cup of *mochi* soup from them. ‘After all, they are fellow compatriots!’ I was so delighted that I was almost crying. At

the same time, I was ashamed of myself for having resented them.

Shichi and Nakahata were reluctant to tell me their whereabouts. In the end, however, when they were about to leave, they agreed to me following them to their new dwelling. We proceeded in the dark using a cord wick as a substitute for a torch. Their dwelling was about a mile north from my hut across a hill. It was a mere thatched tent on a river bank. When I laid my legs out straight to sleep, my feet extended out, over the river.

They had easy access to a banana farm, jungle potatoes and palm trees. I warned them of the risk that the enemy was likely to be particularly vigilant around such a locality. However, Shichi and Nakahata had chosen this place having taken this risk into account. We chatted and I stayed with them that night.

I had a dried cycad nut with me, from which I had already washed away the poison. I borrowed Shichi and Nakahata's milling instruments next morning to make cycad powder. They treated me to dried shrimps as snacks. The shrimps were tasty but perhaps because they were very calorific or because I had not been used to eating them, they sat rather heavily on my stomach.

Nakahata told me, 'I will cook shrimp balls for you next time.' I replied, 'Then, I will cook toad balls for you.' We laughed with each other. In the evening, we went out to take some papayas and I was going to return alone to my own hut.

On our way, we heard strange noises from the river side. As we approached in order to ascertain the source of the noises, '*Tekida!*' there was a shout in Japanese meaning 'enemy (*teki*)' with an exclamation (*da*), followed by gun shots, 'Bang . . . Bang . . .' A man ran towards the upper reaches of the river while shooting his rifle. He left behind a device which was set to catch fish, some other similar devices which were not yet set, and six baskets.

We discussed who he was. 'He was definitely Japanese! He spoke Japanese, you see, when he said "*tekida* (enemy!)'.' I decided not to go home and continued to stay with my two colleagues.

'Was he truly Japanese?' We wondered, 'Was he living alone?' His devices to catch fish suggested that he was not a native. If he returned the next day, we speculated, in order to collect his

belongings, he would have to be a native, because no Japanese would risk his life to return to the place of danger.

Early next morning, we went back to the site to find US cans and cigarettes, a jute sack, a can containing bait shrimps, etc. still lying there as they were the evening before.

Our opinions about his identity remained divided. I decided to go back to my hut that evening. They gave me some of the river shrimps which they had caught and stored in a bamboo case. Sometimes I ate shrimps without cooking them, sometimes after having boiled them with coconut milk.

The location of Shichi and Nakahata's thatched tent on the river bank meant that they were running such a risk of being easily spotted by the enemy that they kept the tent empty and hid all of their belongings in the foxtail grasses five or six hundred yards away. Only at night, they cooked, ate and slept under the tent.

Thereafter, for a while, I lived separately from my two colleagues without any serious incident. In order to keep my promise, I made some papaya balls by mixing grated papayas and cycad powder at a ratio of half and half. Then I cut a toad's belly open, removed its internal organs, filled its empty belly with the papaya balls, and boiled it in coconut milk. I also made its inside-out version by stuffing toad meat inside papaya-cycad balls. I wrapped these in young banana leaves and boiled them in coconut milk. I did my best to cook these with a heart full of good will in order to demonstrate my thanks to Shichi and Nakahata for their hospitality the other day. I wrapped the two sets of food in palm leaves (which were used, like Japanese bamboo leaves, to preserve) and visited my colleagues.

Coincidentally, they were about to move from their river-side tent. I found myself quite unexpectedly helping them move to another place. After having moved to a new place, we took a rest lying on foxtail grasses. Soon afterwards, we were surprised to realize that the grassland was on fire. At first, we stayed there in order to reconnoitre the surrounding environment. The voices of the natives were audible to us from the lower reaches of the river. We then judged that we were safe to move out of the grassland. We ran away cautiously and jumped into a cluster of pandanus-like vines which were green and retained enough water inside to resist fire. As the

whole grassland was enveloped in flames, some Japanese hand grenades which had been left there caught fire and exploded here and there making gruesome noises, 'Bang . . . Crack . . . Bang . . .'

We remained behind the cluster of the pandanus-like vines until sunset and decided to go to my hut together. Having retrieved our household utensils from the jungle, we carried them on our backs, and we went straight, rather than following the usual route, crossing a river which reached the height of our stomachs. It was dawn when we finally reached my hut.

Thereupon, we hid up our belongings in some pandanus trees, and took a rest in the hut. After a few days, we heard the voices of native soldiers chatting and approaching us. As they are getting so near to us, we thought it risky to stay in the hut and ran away. Shichi and I climbed a hill and ran frantically about 700 yards. Nakahata delayed. He did not climb the hill, but ran 300 yards into reeds, narrowly escaping the enemy.

The native soldiers were four or five in number. They talked loudly to each other and dashed around in search of us. They then fired some gun shots into the reeds. They did not see us, so they soon gave up and went home.

We were concerned about Nakahata. We went back to our hut to find that both our hut and Nakahata had survived the attack. As it seemed risky to stay there any longer, we ate enough and left at day break.

We had no particular destination towards which to head. We just kept walking on and on towards the upper reaches of the river. On our way, we came across plenty of wild chilli and fully ripened white cycad nuts which had fallen from the trees. However, as we had not discovered a suitable place to hide ourselves, we were unable to gather them. A road along the river seemed to be an enemy patrol route as we found cigarette ends here and there. Consequently, we needed to keep our eyes open watching out in all directions all the way. We found shrimps swimming in the river but we had no time to catch any. As we became tired of carrying heavy loads, we hid our belongings at the bases of trees and in pandanus-like vines. Each of us carried only a portable rice cooker, a rifle and a tribal machete in order to increase our mobility.

We kept walking further upstream, creeping through foxtail grasses and arrived at a clump of unknown large weeds. There was the stump of a tree in the middle of the weeds. We sat on it. The weeds were taller than we were. Their young sprouts were rolled up to form spirals, emitting a sweet smell which reminded me of a *sengoku* sweets in my home village. I picked it up and tasted it. It was soothing at first, but I felt slightly sick afterwards. Deer liked eating them, so, I assumed that they were not poisonous. But I had no desire to eat them.

As there was a river nearby, I entered the river in bare feet. Something pricked my feet. I quietly inserted my hands into the water and captured it. It was a small shrimp about 0.4 to 0.8 of an inch long.

While we were catching more shrimps in the river, we heard gurgling noises from further upstream. As we looked for the source of the noises carefully, an utterly black creature, about 30 inches (70–80 cm) long and 2.4 inches in diameter, was moving along the weed roots. The head of a smaller one was seen on the other side of the river.

The bigger black creature was apparently chasing shrimps. A snake would show its tongue, but this did not. As I observed it more carefully, its black skin had a number of yellowish spots. I thought it was like a catfish. It was too thick and large to be a catfish. It was considerably larger than the eels with which we were familiar in Japan, but it seemed to me to look like a giant eel. Then, a smaller one, approximately the size of a Japanese eel, came into view. We were then satisfied and delighted that they were eels. How wonderful! We patiently waited until sunset to try to capture them; we could not resist our child-like curiosity.

After sunset, we rolled up our trousers, tucked up our sleeves and went into the river which was almost 20 inches (50 cm) deep. When I brought down my tribal machete onto an eel, it was sliced into two and floated to the surface. When I tried to put them into my bags, its head started swimming and escaped behind weed roots.

I probed, using my hands, the weed roots to such an extent that their shape was altered, but the eel did not come out. I put my hand beneath the weed roots. I touched something very slippery.

When I tried to get hold of it, 'Ouch!' it bit my hand. Eels proved to be rather agile. We, the three of us, were only able to catch one whole eel and two tails.

We boiled the eels in coconut milk to eat them. The eels turned out to be an exceptionally delicious meal for us after such a very long time without this kind of food. We deplored our circumstances under which we needed to risk our lives to go to far away places to catch such delicious game and that such a tasty catch tended to be too little reward for our labour.

As all of us had lost our respective dwellings, we were naturally and happily reunited. We stayed there for about a week. In the meantime, we came across a big pig of about 240 pounds in weight. Unfortunately, we were unable to capture it. However, we had no pan, no means of cooking pork at that time. Therefore, we were content that we did not kill it.

Next day, the natives came over and fired gun shots from a hill in front of us into the swath of reeds. In addition, we heard some voices approaching us from behind.

At first, we feared that we had been discovered. Still, we were pretty sure that we had left no sign of our presence. We therefore kept silent. In the evening, we went to see what had happened in the hill area. There were a pineapple farm and a few navel orange trees. It seemed to us that the natives had come to take some pineapples and fired some warning shots lest any Japanese attack them. Some pineapple rind and empty cartridges were left behind. We reconnoitred the situation further while hiding ourselves nearby. Next day, about twice as many natives as the day before came with a buffalo. We thought it dangerous to stay there and turned towards downstream.

In the moonlight we came upon some red earth which had been denuded of vegetation under US bombardment and some stark remains of Japanese aircraft which had been shot down. We prayed for the pilot. As we felt tired, we took a rest on the spot. Soon dawn came in the east. There was no means by which we could hide ourselves. We quickly went 500 yards down towards the foxtail grasses to find a patch of small and shabby jungle. We dived into the jungle and fell asleep.

An unknown period of time elapsed. 'Woof . . . woof . . .' The barking of dogs surprised and woke us up. As we peeped through the jungle, a group of natives was seen across the foxtail grassland, advancing upstream and investigating something.

As we had arrived here recently and had not made any mess around the area, we calmly observed what they did rather than running away. At around noon, black smoke was seen from the direction where we had been until the day before. The natives were burning the foxtail grasses, perhaps because they found the grasses hindering their passage or because they wanted to get rid of us, the Japanese soldiers.

In the evening, we went to the river, caught some poisonous toads, removed the poisonous parts, drew water and came back. We chopped papayas and stuffed toad meat in them for our dinner. We lay down on mud, covering our heads with reeds and slept like dogs or pigs rather than human beings.

Next day, we built a simple hut and went out to fetch our belongings which we had earlier hidden in trees. Some plates, a kettle and bins were missing. I think it was Japanese, not the native patrols, who took them.

From around this time, I started to mend my clothing with hibiscus (*pago*) fibres. The bark of a hibiscus could be neatly peeled from the top to the bottom. I peeled the bark piece by piece in the moonlight; washed them in the river next morning; and dried them to extract fibres.

At first, we chopped an eel with a tribal machete to catch it. I brought the machete down horizontally on an eel in the middle of its body. Because it was swimming forward, only its tail, about 8 inches long, came to the surface and its head swam away. After a number of trials, we discovered that we should bring the machete right down on its head vertically and slice the head in two. Then, both halves of its body floated on the surface. We needed to bring the machete straight down with our full strength and pull it straight towards ourselves. If we brought the machete down at an angle, it slipped. Care was needed lest we injure our own legs.

We studied how to catch eels more easily. In the end, we decided to make a long cylinder-shaped trap as we used to do in our home-

land. Shichi wanted to make it with bamboo in accordance with the Japanese method. I proposed to make it with reeds as they were abundantly available on Guam. In the end, we agreed to compete with each other to decide which was better.

Shichi was a solid man and manufactured a very solid trap. I had difficulty putting soft reed straws straight, as they bent easily. I still took it easy and wound a rope made from coconut shell fibres around the bent framework. 'Well, eels will easily escape from that!' Shichi mocked my work. In practice, however, my trap caught two eels by next morning whereas Shichi's caught none. Reeds had double advantages over bamboos on account of their availability and ease in handling. My method was proven to be superior.

Eventually, we realized that eels hid among riverside reeds. We decided that we should set a trap after sunset in order to escape the notice of the patrols; slept overnight nearby; and pulled the trap out of the river at daybreak before going home. The traps caught not only eels but sometimes also shrimps. This method of catching eels was by now becoming a routine.

While peace lasted, our nerves calmed down, and nobody dared to propose that we attempt to create a long-term dwelling. We were satisfied so long as we were able to survive each and every day. We did a bit of cooking every morning and evening and took a nap in the middle of weeds during the daytime. We thought we were in paradise so long as we heard no barking of dogs and no native voices. However, such peace did not last long.

We soon began to experience the occasional approach of a group of natives, who followed dogs, beating wood and shouting 'Hoi! Hoi!' Some gunshots were heard, too. We thought that the mopping-up operations were still continuing.

We were thus forced to search for another place in which to live. Looking from the top of a tree, we found another patch of jungle on the other side of the river. We decided to scout this out. We packed our personal belongings in each other's sacks and hid them in trees, in fact, by hanging them from tree branches, as we customarily did in those days, before departing for that new patch of jungle. There, we found breadfruit trees and plenty of cycad nuts. We spent about a week in search of a suitable place to build a hut.

When we came back to our actual hut, I found my belongings, especially clothing, wet and rotten, perhaps due to the squalls of rain or morning dew.

Shichi had a canvas sack and Nakahata had a rubber sack and their personal goods were all right. Only I suffered as I had knitted a sack from hibiscus fibres. I had to do a lot of patching and repairs to my only surviving set of clothes which were already almost worn out. Yes, I was a tailor by profession. But I had no resources with which to do the job!

Firstly, I knitted a fabric with large stitches from hibiscus fibres by applying my earlier experience of making straw baskets when I joined the construction of an airfield in 1944. I made a pair of knitting needles from bamboo. I knew how to knit from my childhood having observed my mother, aunt, cousins, etc. I knitted a piece of cloth. But hibiscus fibres were rough to the touch like wool and tightly bound my body, causing stiffness in my shoulders. This was not a success.

Secondly, I made a net with meshes as close as possible. As I once undid Nihei's hammock to obtain a lace, I remembered how a hammock was made. This produced rather fine-looking clothing. But it hugged my body too tightly to move. Another failure.

After a variety of bitter failures, the necessity compelled me to consider making a genuine piece of cloth. My mother had a treadle loom and I vaguely remembered how she wove cloth with it every evening, 'trum . . . trum . . . chut . . . chut . . .' Of course, I had no idea how to make a treadle mechanism. But I knew roughly what a loom was and how it functioned. I made a rectangular wooden framework of a loom about 8 inches (20 cm) in width by 12 inches (30 cm) in length. When I stripped the bark from a hibiscus tree, white fibres appeared from beneath the bark. The fibres could be easily peeled as thin as possible. I removed the peelings near the bark which had been damaged by insects. I used only fine peelings deeper underneath. I cut each peeling into a suitable width, yarned it into a thread and stretched the threads vertically from the top of the loom to the bottom, i.e. the warp. On the other hand, I made a shuttle for shooting the thread of the woof between the threads of the warp. As I shot a thread of the woof between the warp threads,

I pulled the woof tightly towards myself with a bamboo spatula. This pulling required considerable force. Therefore, I attached the top of the loom to a tree stem and sustained and pushed its bottom with my stomach.

However, it was difficult to keep the wooden framework of the loom still and not crooked. I made mortises and tenons to join the four corners of the loom, and nailed the corners with bamboo nails. Even then, the corners squeaked so much while weaving that I worried lest the enemy might hear the noise. I was unable to concentrate on weaving.

After these failures, I decided to fasten the four corners of the loom securely with ropes. The ropes successfully kept the loom still and quiet while weaving.

Yarning threads was not an easy task either. At first, I yarned thin peelings from a hibiscus tree as soon as I peeled them. However, the peelings seemed to have contained some alkaline element. When I wore a piece of clothing from these fibres, the fabric melted with sweat and stuck to my skin.

Secondly, I soaked the peelings in water for a couple of days before yarning. Still, under wet weather conditions, the resulting clothing became sticky. Also, perhaps due to the alkaline element, the weave loosened easily and holes and gaps developed in the texture. Even so, at that stage, I was satisfied as long as I could meet the immediate need by making some patchwork.

About a ten years later, I happened to realize that it was better not to make a yarn as tightly as an ordinary cotton thread. When I wove with very lightly yarned threads, all the problems associated with the hibiscus fibres disappeared. Thereafter, I made a larger loom and went on to weave more ambitious textiles.

In fact, the clothing which the army had given us lasted only a few years. At first, we tanned a poisonous toad's skin to make patches. Following the manner in which the natives tanned a piece of hide into a piece of leather, we soaked the toad skin in water with ashes for about a week and dried it under the sun. We used such toad leather as patches to cover holes on our shirt and trousers.

It was from around 1950 that I was compelled to begin tailoring from hibiscus fibres.

The process of my tailoring was roughly as follows: a shirt required four pieces of cloth the size of a large towel for its frontal part; two pieces for its back; four pieces for both of its sleeves; two to three pieces for its collar; and one piece for its shoulders; in total fourteen to fifteen pieces. It would have been possible to weave them in a month or so if I could concentrate on weaving. However, I had to search for food and cook in the meantime. In practice, therefore, it took three to four months to weave these clothes.

It took about a month to cut down hibiscus trees and extract their fibres; then three to four months to weave the necessary number of pieces of cloth; and then another month to tailor them into a set of shirt and trousers. None of the parts of this process was particularly easy. Indeed, the process consisted of a series of extremely hard and laborious stages. At the same time, the satisfaction of making something gave me pleasure.

I did not know that Japan had been defeated. I believed a theory that Japan was to have a war once every decade, as it had the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, and the First World War of 1914–18. I believed firmly, therefore, that if I waited for ten years, the Japanese army would surely strike back and invade this island, too. After the first ten years had passed, then, I believed they would come in another ten years' time.

In order to survive such a long-term war by feeding and supplying ourselves, I taught Shichi and Nakahata how to weave and how to tailor. Each of us met each one's own needs by making everything from scratch.

We had also impressed upon ourselves how important it was not to steal the natives' foodstuffs and crops and not to cause any trouble to them. Therefore, after my discovery, the leader of Talofof village thanked me for the fact that not even a single hen and indeed a single egg had disappeared from his village.

## CHAPTER 11

# ‘NO WAY TO SURVIVE BUT TO HIDE US UNDERGROUND’ (1950–1959)



We spent about seven years after the US invasion endlessly wandering in the jungle, with great difficulty, to search for a secure place to live. Whenever we thought we had found such a place and built a hut with much hardship, we were soon attacked and chased by the enemy and had to look for another place to live.

In the meantime, we kept our rifles and hand grenades permanently with us. We were determined to kill the enemy and ourselves in case of emergency. Even if we were wounded, we would not seek to survive by becoming a prisoner of war. Such was not an honourable thing to do. We were determined to commit suicide or die fighting in that eventuality.

We were on the run and kept wandering from one place to another. We eventually tired of such a nomadic life. ‘There is no way but to hide ourselves underground to survive.’ Even so, natural caves were expected to have been well known to the natives. Actually, Nakahata had been attacked when he was living in a cave on a cliff with Kamijō and Fujita.

Therefore, we had no choice but to dig a hole underground to accommodate ourselves. We looked for a place which satisfied the following three conditions for security and subsistence: first, neither too easy nor too difficult access to food; second, reasonable access to safe water and firewood; and third, no or rare human passage nearby. By the third condition, I mean a point where there was no footpath or which was away from a path, in other words, such a

place as the local people, who did not need to hide themselves, would not trouble themselves to walk through. We concluded that the ideal point would be near the entrance of a patch of jungle spreading on the slope from a river to a hill, especially on the biogeographical boundary between riverside reed marshland and dry foxtail grassland.

From around April 1950, we selected a suitable place and dug a hole horizontally from the foxtail grassland above the riverside reed marshland, deeper into the hill. We had neither spade nor shovel with which to dig. Instead, we flattened the edge of a piece of hard lime wood and stabbed the ground with it.

It was like the Stone Age. We burnt the flattened edge of the lime wood to harden it, but it was still not hard enough to dig a hole. We then bound a fragment of a US bomb shell on it with a rope, and scratched away the earth little by little.

One of us dug a hole. Another pushed the earth out from the hole. The third went out to throw away the earth. We alternately performed each of these three tasks. We were covered with mud and sweat.

We made the entrance as small and inconspicuous as possible, while making the inside as spacious as practicable. Of course, we could only manage to dig about three feet (1 metre) in height. The one who dug kept crouching and was unable to stretch his legs. The one who disposed of the earth in a reed basket on his back shuttled back and forth a great number of times every night. On this occasion, we dug some pits in the marshland along the river into which we disposed of the earth. Thereafter, we covered and camouflaged the pits with mud.

During daytime, we took a nap in reeds far away from the hole. In the evening, we collected some young parsley from the river, cooked a kind of starch gruel with cycad powder and parsley and ate it. We worked only at night. The first cock crowed in a nearby village at midnight. The second and third cocks crowed at around three o'clock in the morning. Then, we stopped working and began to clear up the mess. In moonlight and starlight, we checked whether or not the dumping pits were well camouflaged, and we erased our footprints. In the meantime, one of us ran to look for some green

breadfruit and coconuts. For breakfast, we ate something which we had cooked the evening before. We only ate twice a day from those days onwards.

In April, a breadfruit tasted like an aubergine. From May to June it became gradually ripened and attracted lots of bees. It tasted like a potato at that stage. In August and September, some red stripes appeared on its surface. This was the proper season to eat breadfruit. It grew as large as a watermelon and tasted really like baked bread. In the typhoon season, it fell from the tree.

A ripe breadfruit became rotten within a day after being pulled off the tree. Therefore, we sliced it into thin slices, dried them by fire, and then ground them with a grinder while they were still hot. This was because a breadfruit was not a cereal.

Breadfruit powder made jelly in hot water. The powder could be used for coating items for frying. When baked, it tasted like sweet potato or sponge cake. One day, I came across a rotten breadfruit emitting a smell of alcohol. I picked a fully ripened, nine-month old breadfruit from the tree, just when it was about to fall. I then cut it into very small pieces, added some water to them, wrapped them with a cloth, pressed them by hand and finally heated the juice. The starch came up to the surface. I drew the starch and placed it in a square container. The resulting jelly was delicious. When I simmered the juice until it became like pulp, it produced an alcoholic drink in three days. It tasted like cider. When I kept it for a further two or three weeks, it turned very sour. Later on, when Shichi and Nakahata had ringworms on their buttocks, Shichi, as a medic, knew that vinegar could kill the infection, and applied the breadfruit vinegar with immediate effect. We acquired such knowledge gradually as we encountered and overcame a series of difficulties. Earlier, for example, because a raw and fully ripened breadfruit tasted really like a cream puff (*chou à la crème*), we tended to eat too much of it and suffered from swollen intestines. When we were impatient and boiled a breadfruit with its rind still on it, it was too bitter to eat.

There were two kinds of breadfruit on the island: a round leaf version and a fringed leaf version. The fringed leaf version was sweeter. We also discovered that its seed was like a chestnut and kept its seeds for future need.

When we dug the first hole, breadfruit was still green. Its rind was too bitter to eat. Once picked, it did not last more than three days. It was not particularly nutritious either. However, we had nothing else to eat.

First, we dug straight horizontally up to 15 feet (5 metres) from the entrance. From the end, we dug up to 9 feet (3 metres) to the right and 6 feet (2 metres) to the left, making a 'T' shape. It took a month to do so. We made a hearth at the end of the right wing, and thrust upwards to make a ventilation duct right above the hearth. As we dug a hole beneath a slope from near a river bank towards a hill, the entrance was situated less than 3 feet (1 metre) below the surface, whereas the hearth was 9 feet (3 metres) below the surface. We poked from below with a lime tree branch to make a ventilation duct. We needed to add to the branch a number of times to thrust through the 9 feet of earth. Thereupon, we widened the duct's diameter from above, up to 8 inches (20 cm). Finally, we fitted betel palm panels to the walls and the ceilings to finish them.

This hole only narrowly accommodated the three of us. When we made a fire inside on which to cook, the intense heat was hardly bearable. Air did come into the hole from the entrance, but it did not go out through the ventilation duct. The smoke filled inside the hole and the air coming from the entrance simply stirred the smoke so much that we were hardly able to breathe. We slept together at night. But if the hole was discovered, there was no way to escape. We suffered from growing anxiety. The hole was certainly not comfortable enough to stay in. It was much more comfortable to take a nap or eat breadfruit or weave cloth in the foxtail grasses under the sun. In the end, we lived in the hole only for a month and began wandering again. Our first hole was never discovered by the enemy. Even so, the natives frequently passed on the other bank of the river. So, we were never able to feel at home in the hole.

We were on the run. We were constantly worried about everything. We thought that we had to take precautions against all odds. Anxiety was constantly swirling around the recesses of our minds. Was this because we were, perhaps unreasonably, too cautious? Whenever I was about to panic due to anxiety, a strong will or determination emerged from inside my mind, 'I shall never give up!'

The force which encouraged me under such circumstances was, although I cannot think of any good description of it, neither pride nor obstinacy nor will-power but the pursuit of some proof that I was still a human being, even though I had been living like a half-wild animal.

Breadfruit were already becoming ripe at that time. We also came across woods of soursops, which were a bit like pineapples, and woods of alligator pears,<sup>1</sup> which were smaller than soursops. Therefore, the island at that time of the year was a paradise as far as food was concerned. However, it was so hot that no fruit, once picked, lasted for more than a few minutes. We were always worried about food for the next day while eating food for this day. Although I described our circumstances of the time in terms of a paradise, we were still suffering from chronic hunger. The mopping-up operations and patrols appeared to have become increasingly frequent. Perhaps, from the point of view of our enemy, we, the Japanese soldiers, were thought to have been likely to become less cautious during the season in which food was abundant.

On one occasion, we came out of a piece of jungle to find fifty or so US soldiers just having moved away. Even when we came across a ripened coconut which had fallen from a palm tree, I investigated the surroundings in order to ascertain whether it had naturally fallen from a palm tree or somebody had deliberately placed it there.

‘Watch out before picking up a coconut or taking one from a palm tree.’

I myself had difficulties resisting my appetite but I cautioned my two colleagues. If US troops or the natives had counted the number of coconuts and deliberately left some coconuts with some sorts of sign on them, we would tell them where we were by picking them up. Moreover, by doing so, we would also endanger the lives of our comrades who had presumably hidden themselves nearby. Often, we found catches of fish in traps in the river. We instigated an absolute prohibition against stealing the fish inside.

Before leaving the hole, we baked the inner part of coconuts and carried them as portable food. Perhaps because they were not sufficiently baked, they eventually developed red moulds. Japanese rice cakes (*mochi*) and rice wine (*sake*) curds developed either blue or

yellow mould. These were rather sweet and I knew from my experience in Japan that the blue or yellow moulds were not harmful. By contrast, red moulds were, I was convinced, toxic. I advised Shichi and Nakahata to throw them away. Still, Nakahata said, 'We will not know unless we test them', and put them into his mouth. 'Bitter!' he immediately spat them out. We wanted to eat everything feasible because of the severity of our hunger. But we would have died if we had failed to compose ourselves and resisted our appetite.

Towards the end of the breadfruit season, we decided to dig a hole for the second time.

We looked for a place which satisfied the following three conditions: panoramic view, sunshine and hardly any human thoroughfare. Such a location was expected to be surrounded by a large and sparse patch of jungle. To admit much sunshine, we thought it best to dig a hole under foxtail grasses in a patch of jungle. This time, we first dug a hole vertically only about 3 feet (1 m) deep, because we were still inexperienced in underground life at that time. From the bottom, we dug horizontally to make an 'L' shape. In order to dig straight, we stretched a rope made from coconut shells from a hilly area covered with tall foxtail grasses about twenty yards away. We tied another rope to the person who dug, held the rope at the entrance, and tried to ensure that two ropes were in parallel. We aimed to dig forward to the foxtail grasses. We worked only at night. We had no proper instrument with which to dig. It took about half a year to complete the work. When we finished the job, it was already the following year. However, when we thrust through a ventilation duct vertically from the end of the tunnel twenty yards away from the entrance, the duct was as far as six feet left of the target position. Therefore, we had to dig another tunnel to adjust the error. On this occasion, Shichi did the digging; I pushed the earth to the entrance; and Nakahata, the youngest and strongest of all, went out to dispose of and hide the earth without any of us alternating. Nakahata's job was the hardest of all. Nakahata dug pits at the roots of foxtail grasses, filled them with earth and covered them with dead leaves.

We worked every night without taking a rest or eating and were covered with earth. Heaven was not yet to help us. The rainy season

arrived and the water table rose. The water flooded the tunnel passage and the first ventilation duct. The toilet overflowed. The entrance hole was filled with water up to 20 inches (50 cm) deep from the bottom. By then, about 70 per cent of the underground shelter had been completed, but it looked like a failure.

I thought about digging a drainage duct. However, we needed to dig a canal at least 1.5 times longer than the main shelter to clear the water. Furthermore, the only place where we could drain the water was on the slope of a bare mountain whose vegetation had been torn apart by the US bombardment. In short, there was nothing to hide the drainage exit.

We were all depressed when we experienced such insurmountable difficulties. We became unable to do anything. Eating was the only thing which we were able to manage. Nobody washed his clothing, although it was covered with mud. It was even harder to sew rips at the seams.

It was also not easy to live in the hole. We had to carry in all foodstuffs. Naturally, we left footprints and footprints became footpaths. We had a wide view, which meant that the enemy would have the same. Indeed, even in the moonlight or even in the starlight, our cooking smoke was visible from some 300 yards away. The wind carried our cooking smell as far as about a half to one mile (1000–1500 metres) away. We were never free from the sense of insecurity.

As no particularly good idea came to our minds, we dug three individual rooms at the end of the tunnel and filled the tunnel, up to the line of inundation, with the earth from these three rooms. Therefore, we were only able to creep and lie down inside the hall area.

We were so busy digging that there was little time available for finding food. We hunted sixty or so poisonous toads on one occasion in a nearby pond, roasted them, and nibbled at them. In retrospect, it is amazing that our bodies endured such a long period of intensive labour with so little food.

Our second hole was not safe. During the daytime, each of the three of us separately went into the surrounding jungle in search of food. Breadfruit was out of season. We therefore gathered taros,

jungle potatoes, wild papayas and cycad nuts. Perhaps because no sea breeze reached there, none of these products grew very big. As deer and field mice also ate them, we were forced to compete with these animals. During this period, too, river fish remained an important source of protein. We were particularly delighted to find eels living beneath reed roots. It seemed that shrimps ate reed roots or algae, and eels ate shrimps. The main stream of the River Talofofu would have been abundant in fish. But it was too risky to venture out that far.

While we were in the second hole, we made more efficient traps to catch fish in our few unoccupied hours. Usually, there was one valve per trap to prevent the captured fish from getting out. I put in two valves to make sure that even a long eel would not be able to escape by way of its tail.

We stayed in the second hole for about half a year. Due to the rising water table, we filled with earth almost half of the space between the floor and the ceiling of the main tunnel. As a result, I kept hitting my back against the ceiling. When it rained, the earth above the ceiling became soft. We once narrowly escaped from a ceiling as it collapsed.

From this hole, we had to go quite a distance for hunting and gathering. Especially during the rainy season, our footprints became conspicuous. It was quite a tiresome job to erase them. Steadily, we became desperate and anxious.

Early one morning, it was my turn to gather green breadfruit. It was still dark so that I hesitated to climb a breadfruit tree. Suddenly, the sounds of two gunshots reached me from the south, accompanied by the barking of dogs. I immediately climbed the tree with caution and watched out to find some buffaloes and natives on a hill about 1.2 to 1.8 miles (2–3000 metres) away.

I feared that they might come to our patch of the jungle in the afternoon. I quickly picked up ten pieces of breadfruit and returned to the hole. While erasing the traces of my passage, I wondered whether the foxtail grasses would burn very well if they were set alight in that sort of dry, windy weather.

After a while, ashes began to fall into our hole. Nakahata went up the entrance hole to see what was happening. The foxtail grasses

were on fire; fanned by the wind, the fire was approaching us at an enormous speed. It was too risky to get out and run away, because it was still daytime. If we stayed inside the hole, the smoke would come in and suffocate us.

In that instant, I ordered that a cover should be fitted on the entrance opening. We managed to place a stone on it. We poured on the earth as much water as we had in the hole, kneaded the mud and filled the gap with it.

‘We will be suffocated, won’t we?’

‘But we would otherwise be suffocated by the smoke!’

‘Even so, is it alright?’

‘Trust me!’

I remembered a story which I read in my childhood. When Kojirō Koganei and Shingorō Shinmon were in a prison in Yedo (Tokyo’s name before 1868), there was a fire in the prison.

‘Shinmon, help me!’ ‘What’s happened?’ Koganei realized that there was a building near the cells where barrels of rapeseed oil were stored. Koganei and Shinmon kneaded mud with drain water and filled the gaps of the gate of the rapeseed oil storage house before they ran away from the fire. After the fire had subsided, everyone came back to find only the rapeseed oil storage house had survived it. Prison officials were impressed and asked, ‘Who has kindly done this?’ No prisoner came forward to answer, but eventually it transpired that Koganei and Shinmon had done it. As a reward, they were set free.

Making an instant decision, I followed this story.

For a short while, everything above the hole was wrapped in flames. We gathered below our only ventilation duct and instinctively pushed our faces on the earth wall to breathe the last bit of oxygen. It felt like a terribly long period of time to endure. The quality of air inside the hole was gradually deteriorating. We began to feel dizzy, and had severe headaches. The three of us lost any strength to climb up the entrance hole to see outside, and grew pale and dazed as if all were possessed by death. ‘No!’ I squeezed out the last bit of my strength to climb up the ladder step by step and frantically pushed the stone out of the opening. Fresh cool air poured in. I felt as if I was seeing Buddha in hell or finding water in

the middle of a desert. I frantically climbed out of the hole and breathed the air outside. How delicious it was! I still remember the taste of the air at that time.

'Oy! Come out!'

As I called the other two, they also staggered out of the hole and said:

'How refreshing!'

'Squad Leader, you have saved our lives! Without your good sense, we would have been suffocated to death by the smoke!'

'I am pleased to see that all of us have survived.'

The sun was setting in the west. The natives seemed to have gone back to their village. Thus, we were truly made free.

We lay flat down on weeds. We then nibbled at wild papayas and crunchy coconuts, peeled the bitter rind of green breadfruit and bit at it and at hard coconuts like rabbits. We had used all the water we had to make mud to fill the gaps of the entrance cover in order to prevent the smoke from coming in. We were simply too exhausted to make a fire or to go to the river to draw water.

Yes, we had a hairbreadth escape from the smoke and fire. However, as the entire grassland was burnt down, our hole was completely exposed on a hill, and no longer secure enough to hide us.

We had to abandon it even after so much work to dig it. We decided to go and hide ourselves temporarily behind the 'Hoi Hoi' swath of reed fields, as we called it. We neatly sorted out the place where we had lain down and ate food, and walked along the burnt fields cautiously so as not to leave any footprints behind. When we made it all the way to the 'Hoi Hoi' swath of reed fields, the sun was already shining as high as 9 feet (3 metres) above the horizon. Some gunshots were fired in the Talofoto village area, signalling the departure of native troops. The barking of dogs followed. We quickly put our loads of belongings in the middle of the reed-bed, and sorted out the mess which we had created there. We hid ourselves behind the reeds and observed what was going on. Groups of natives came from the lower reaches of the river and proceeded upstream, presumably in order to hunt Japanese soldiers.

We got used to concealing ourselves under such circumstances. As we had erased all traces of our passage and other activities, we

were sure that they would never notice our presence. However, if we had been less careful and had left our footprints behind, we would have been discovered and killed by the natives a long time ago.

Then, another piece of bad luck struck. While we were lying on the reeds without any roof over us, the rain came down. Our clothing was thoroughly soaked. There was no dry place left for us to sit, nor were we able to cook food with a fire. All we could do was to nibble at crunchy coconuts and to spend a long night.

Shichi became ill because of the exposure to the rain. ‘My chest aches terribly!’ We never knew from what disease he was suffering. Shichi lost his appetite. All we were able to do was to keep him lying down. Nakahata and I built a simple hut with a thatched roof in a large bamboo thicket nearby, and lived as quietly and inconspicuously as possible.

In the meantime, Shichi began to recover. One late afternoon after supper, Nakahata and I decided to go and pick bananas from a deserted banana plantation on the bank of the River Talofofu with which we had previously been familiar. We walked stealthily along the bio-geographical boundary between the jungle and foxtail grasses. It was further than we thought. We walked about 3.7 miles (6 km) and reached the banana plantation only after sunset.

Under the starlight, we carefully took from the trees about seven bunches of crop bananas and fruit bananas with their branches. We packed them in our sacks. We then found some taro potatoes on the river bank. We dug out some 32 pounds of taros. Nakahata and I distributed them evenly between us to carry them, hanging the loads from our necks on both shoulders with hibiscus bark straps.

Puffing and panting under these heavy loads, up hill, down dale, we groped our way in the dark. The loads were so heavy that we had to take a rest from time to time. Although we were imagining Shichi longing for our return, our legs refused to walk as fast as we wanted. We finally lost our way.

Nakahata and I decided to take a nap until dawn. I pulled out a fire cord wick from a bamboo pipe to make a fire, and baked nine pieces of crop bananas, three pieces each for the three of us including Shichi. Crop bananas were not edible unless they were baked.

They tasted like baked potatoes. Ripened ones tasted like baked carrots. Nakahata and I sat on the ground, ate hot bananas, and chatted. I told Nakahata quite innocently with good intentions,

‘How kind of you to look after Shichi so well!’

However, Nakahata seemed to have interpreted my words to mean:

‘How can you trouble yourself to look after that sort of man?’

As soon as Nakahata went back to the hut, he seemed to have transmitted such a twisted nuance of my words to Shichi. Shichi was thus estranged from me.

I tried to mend our damaged relationship by going alone to hunt toads as far as some 1.8 miles away, but to no avail. Therefore, I decided to withdraw. I built a hut with a thatched roof in the reeds about 0.6 miles (1 km) west of Shichi and Nakahata’s hut and lived there on my own.

There were some bamboo shoots and coconuts. I was able to capture some field mice, too. I made a bamboo trap like the one which I had made earlier to catch wild birds, and placed it at the root of a tree. In this place, it caught lots and lots of field mice. As I eventually became fed up with eating roast mice, I thought about frying them with a cycad powder coating.

I had by then developed a more advanced method of obtaining palm oil. First, I ground a coconut kernel (copra) with a grinder; added a small amount of water to it; strained it thoroughly; added a small amount of water again; kneaded it three times and pressed it thoroughly; and boiled the liquid thereby obtained. It was like making soya bean curd; while simmering the liquid, I patiently kept stirring the liquid gently; took care not to bring it to the boil; and kept taking away the scum. Then, eventually the oil began to be separated from the water. Actually, I suffered a number of failures before managing to extract palm oil in this way, and changed the ratio of coconut ground and water as well as the manner of simmering a great number of times. I drew the separated oil into a different container. Then, I added some water again to simmer it again to repeat the same process of separation. I repeated the process until the oil boiled and the water element evaporated from the pan.

Anyway, I coated a piece of mouse meat with cycad powder and fried it in palm oil. It tasted rather good. This made a sumptuous dinner for me. Sumptuous!? Well, if you kept eating roast mice every day, however hungry you might be, you were destined, were you not, to become fed up with them?

One night, I was extracting palm oil by simmering the liquid in my steel helmet. The heat was so intense that I was completely naked. Suddenly, firewood snapped and sparks fell upon the oil and flared up. I panicked and threw water on it. The fire then spread everywhere and the whole of my hut was wrapped in flames. I was astonished and ran out of the hut without putting any clothing on me. I very narrowly escaped from the fire. The flames went up more than 3 yards into the air. I was unable to do anything. Everything was burnt down, including my lens, which was second in importance to my life, my clothing which I had spent months to tailor, etc. I lost everything. I was shattered.

During the inferno, I was too shocked to pay attention to the surrounding circumstances. Some while later, when I calmed down a bit, I feared that the enemy might have seen the raging flames. I concentrated on sorting out the remains of my burnt hut in the starlight and kept my eyes open vigilantly from behind nearby foxtail grasses.

I made and tied coconut shell fibre coat around my waist. Under the circumstances, I had no choice but to go and ask Shichi and Nakahata for help. However, their hut was empty, and in fact, already in a dilapidated condition. It seemed that they had moved somewhere else a long time earlier. I went to the banana plantation hoping that they might be around there. I called them in a strangled voice, but there was no reply. I was unable to think of any other place where Shichi and Nakahata were likely to go. I returned to a place near the burnt ruin of my hut.

'I have truly become alone. I have lost everything.' I was being overwhelmed by despair. However: 'I shall never give up. I shall never die in such a place!' Such a passionate determination emerged in my mind.

As I had lost my lens, I was unable to make a fire. I nibbled at everything without cooking it. But I could not go on forever only

with a straw coat around my waist. I had to build a hut without any sewing items or any tools whatsoever. I did not know how to survive. I was facing a totally unworkable future.

I had an expectation of my death on a number of occasions. However, I never tried to kill myself. Strangely, I never thought of committing suicide even under such hopeless circumstances. Even when I had to eat a mouse without cooking it, I was calculating that as long as I ate it immediately after having captured it, it would not harm my duodenum. I also thought that because wild animals ate everything uncooked, human beings, too, would not die by doing so. I had an expectation of death, but struggled to survive.

In the meantime, the natives came over and set fire to the foxtail grasses. I waited until they had gone home in the evening, and managed to ignite my cord wick from the burning embers. After having secured fire in this way, I planned to weave pieces of cloth. In order to make a shirt, roughly ten hibiscus trees, in other words, 1,800 pieces of thread were required. Therefore, I first built a hut in the upper reaches of the 'Hoi Hoi' river. Then, I spent a long time felling the necessary number of hibiscus trees every morning, stripping their bark and peeling off their fibre tissues in order to create yarn threads. I had to fell hibiscus trees in a manner in which no trace of my activity would remain visible. Therefore, every time I felled a hibiscus, I cut it down at its roots, piled earth on its stump, and placed dead leaves on it to camouflage it. I needed to take such meticulous care in all respects. I had to erase my footprints, for example. Therefore, my weaving progressed very slowly. Even so, the weaving comforted my lonely heart, and I stayed up very late every night to weave.

One of those nights, Shichi and Nakahata emerged out of the blue. Something rustled at night, followed by 'Oy'. It was Shichi's voice. I immediately recognized it, and answered, 'Oy!' Thus, after a long time in isolation, Nakahata, Shichi and I were reunited. They brought me some eels. We boiled them and spent a night eating them and chatting.

Shichi found me almost completely naked, and promised to come back to help me weave pieces of cloth. However, for reasons which

I did not understand, they did not tell me where they lived. They went home next dawn.

They popped in again two months later. By then, I had almost finished tailoring my shirt and trousers. There was nothing for them to help with.

In those days, I attached two cartridges to the door of each of my mouse traps so that they would clink whenever the door shut. I set a number of such traps, with pieces of coconut kernel as bait, at a variety of places in my hut. While I was weaving or tailoring at night, clinks signalled to me every time a mouse was caught. I cooked only a mouse's liver to eat. The skin of a mouse was the easiest of all the animal skins to peel. After smoothly removing the skin, I opened its belly and hung the meat from a tree. The meat was thoroughly dried in a day under the sun. I preserved dried meat ready for the times when I caught nothing.

In the meantime, Shichi and Nakahata kept wandering from one place to another. They popped in occasionally to complain, 'We have no firewood', or 'We have only a few breadfruit trees and bananas.' Eventually, they began to say they wanted to live near me.

'You are welcome,' I said. For a while, we lived separately in two huts among the same patch of foxtail grassland and kept some distance between ourselves.

However, as three of us lived on the same patch of grassland, we seemed to have made a considerable noise. Within ten days of their coming to live with me, more than a dozen natives approached very near us, shouting 'Hoi! Hoi!' They encircled the grassland. There was another group of natives on the other side of the river to prevent any possible exit from the grassland. Still, I knew for sure that they would never venture into foxtail grasses which grew taller than human beings. They fired bullets into the grasses. I kept lying flat down quietly on the ground for a couple of hours.

After I checked that they had gone, I quickly went to see Shichi and Nakahata's hut. They assumed that I had surely been killed in the shooting and that some enemy was approaching them. They aimed at me and were about to pull the triggers of their rifles when I emerged. I was truly about to be shot by my colleagues. It would have been a horrible tragedy if I had been shot by them after having

survived the enemy's attacks. In any case, 'We can no longer stay here, can we?'

By saying this, Shichi and Nakahata did not propose that we should live together again. They kindly saw me off at a point upstream of the banana plantation. They promised to make occasional contact and went away.

Soon thereafter, they visited me and petitioned, 'Nakahata pulled off his trousers before going to sleep, kicked them into the hearth while sleeping and burnt them. In addition, we have little food to eat . . .'

I helped them make Nakahata's new pair of trousers and gave them some food. In this way, we came to live together again for ten days or so. As they stayed with me for a longish time, Shichi reverted to complaining about me again, and we were once more estranged from each other. Probably, in addition to our age difference, our respective characters did not fit each other well. Shichi and Nakahata returned to their hut some 3 miles (5 km) away.

I was left alone, and was blessed with a period of comparative peace. I caught as many as 175 eels a year. I also caught lots of shrimps. There were a great number of snails (with shells) about 2 inches (5 cm) long. 'A Book To Assure Our Victory', i.e. the War Ministry's book which I had read on board the *Akimaru* on route to Guam, said that snails were edible if roasted. Yes, they were edible after they were roasted, but they were still too slimy and unpleasant to eat for me. Therefore, I kneaded them well on hearth ashes and washed them in water a number of times to remove their sliminess. Then I slowly simmered them down in coconut milk with papayas to eat them.

I stayed there for one and half years. However, I began to see smoke rising into the air every morning and evening from around the banana plantation near me, suggesting that the natives had come back to run the plantation again. I went to scout there and found some huts and a sentry box. 'I cannot live here, too, any longer . . .'

While I was feeling insecure, Shichi visited me to ask for help. 'Nakahata has been indisposed with a chill and is laid up and has a recent history of being so. We are now living in the second hole. But the rising water table has adversely affected the hole as before . . .'

I immediately went and saw Nakahata. I remembered the folk prescription of dried earthworm in my village for such a condition. I obtained the essence from dried earthworms by boiling them in water and let Nakahata drink the extract.

On my way back, I barely missed a group of the natives. I therefore went back to warn Shichi and Nakahata of the danger.

As the danger became imminent in my hut, too, the three of us escaped together into a patch of jungle on the other side of the river. We dug a shallow hole among foxtail grasses within the jungle. However, perhaps because of the air current in the area, or because the hole was too shallow, our cooking smoke went through and out above the grasses. The hole was therefore easily detectable from outside. We abandoned it and looked for a better place. Having found one, we dug a deeper vertical hole from the entrance, and then dug horizontally about 33 feet (10 metres). One month later, when the digging reached its final stage, however, the rainy season arrived and raised the water table, inundating the horizontal tunnel up to 8 inches (more than 20 cm).

As a matter of fact, before these two holes, we had dug another hole and abandoned it after it was similarly flooded. Therefore, we had dug as many as five holes in total. Nevertheless, we were still unable to obtain any secure place to live. We had become lost in the middle of nowhere.

## CHAPTER 12

# HOW TO GET OFF GUAM? 1959 – 1962



In September 1959, the three of us agreed to have a permanent home where we could be settled.

Shichi had appeared to be the strongest of us. He was small but very stoutly built. Around this time Shichi began to suffer from a chill, an ache at the back of his head, stiff shoulders, and occasional stomach-ache, asking us to massage his shoulders; we seemed to have reached our limit, being physically and mentally exhausted after an endless nomadic life and unrelieved tension. We earnestly wanted to be settled somewhere.

For these reasons, the three of us began to dig a much deeper hole than before. From our earlier experience, we selected a spot above the level to which the water table could reach, and which satisfied the other conditions for our security and subsistence. We decided to dig our shelter below a particularly large banyan tree. As we still had only primitive tools, we had to do the job extremely patiently.

A banyan tree has a number of roots descending from branches as high as 6 feet (2 metres) above the ground, and the roots looked like an octopus's legs. Beneath its main stem, we dug a vertical hole of 20 inches (50 cm) square, 13 feet (4 metres) deep. From its bottom, we dug a corridor of 4 feet (1.2 metres) tall, 3 feet (1 metre) wide and 33 feet (10 metres) long. We dug a lavatory in the middle of the corridor. Following the corridor, we dug the main hall of 11 feet (3.5 m) tall, 10 feet (3 metres) wide and 23 feet (7 metres) long. We dug a further 35 feet (more than 10 metres) for a space to

store foodstuffs and firewood, and made a hearth on a side of the hall near this storage space. We repaired a dead piece of breadfruit tree nearly 4 feet in diameter, the core of which had rotted away like a tube, in order to use it to line a ventilation shaft. Depending on the current of air outside, the air sometimes came in from the entrance tunnel and went out from the ventilation duct, and vice versa. We observed and learnt from this phenomenon.

We also dug a vertical shaft along the root of a pandanus tree, which grew between the corridor and the main hall, in order to pull a bucket of water up and lower it down.

We made a ladder from hibiscus trees with which to climb and descend the entrance shaft. We thought that as long as we went in and out stealthily like an old fox or a shy dog, even the natives would not be able to discover our hole.

From afternoon every day, for three months before the completion of this shelter, the three of us kept digging it alternately. As we had only fragments of a bombshell with which to dig, we were actually scratching the earth away little by little rather than digging. Every other night, we pushed the earth, which we had scratched away so far, to the entrance, and pulled it out of the entrance shaft with a rope. We then carried the earth in baskets on our backs to far away places. When we found a depression on the ground, we removed the surface, filled the depression with the earth, and put back the removed surface. We then camouflaged the place with breadfruit leaves or some other leaves, as had become our practice. We eventually began to use our tribal machetes and the lids of our portable rice cookers in order to cut roots and dig.

Because we dug a substantially larger and deeper hole than before, the task of bringing the earth out of the entrance shaft was particularly laborious. At first, we pulled the rope with our bare hands, which became blistered and too painful to bear. Thereafter, we made a kind of pulley and set it on a branch of the banyan tree hanging over the hole to do the job.

While I was crouching and pushing the earth towards my legs with the lid of a rice-cooker, the ground above me gave way and collapsed upon my back. I stopped breathing for a moment due to the shock. I broke out in a greasy sweat and fainted.

Shichi and Nakahata removed the earth from me, got me up and washed the earth away from my skin with cool water. I then regained consciousness. As the shelter was still under construction, there was no safe place to sleep, but Shichi and Nakahata carried me to a corner of the hole which seemed to be reasonably secure. I kept lying up there for many days. Shichi and Nakahata kindly attended me. But we had neither a doctor nor any drugs. The only thing I was able to do was to endure the pain and keep lying up. As time passed, I gradually became able to move my limbs.

Later on, after my ‘discovery’, I was X-rayed as part of my medical examination and told that part of my backbone (the twelfth thoracic vertebra) had been smashed. This might have been due to this accident. But even before that, I had hit my back very severely during one of our overnight assaults in July 1944, when I fell into a deep ditch which the enemy had dug. Also, when I was in the first of our holes, Nakahata threw one of the coconuts which he had gathered into the hole, and this fell straight onto my back. Thus, in total, I had my back struck three times. But I have no idea on which occasion my vertebra was crushed into pieces.

We eventually finished digging the shelter and erected a number of wooden pillars 4 inches square, every 80 inches (2 metres) along the walls, and placed a number of beams 6 inches square on them in order to support the earth. We did not know the name of the wood which we used on this occasion. As it looked like a paulownia wood, we called it ‘south ocean paulownia’. The tree grew straight and shed leaves. We laid down betel palm boards on the floor and some green palm leaves for our beds.

We drank from a spring on a nearby hill. We carried the water in a number of bamboo bottles into the shelter. We washed our clothing in a nearby river at night, and dried it overnight. In retrospect, we selected a very good place. We spent a truly peaceful year there for the first time ever on Guam. On top of that, we were able to gain invaluable experience for the subsequent sustainable and settled life underground.

Shichi used to be employed in a track maintenance section of the National Rail (there was a ministry of railways) before his

enlistment. Therefore, we did some blacksmithing under his direction and made a variety of necessary tools.

The three of us gathered fragments of US bombshells. We picked up the bottom of a bombshell to use as a substitute for a hammer. We made a pair of wooden pincers and bound two pieces of iron sheet on them to hold iron to be heated and hammered. We hammered iron against a bombshell. To heat iron, we tried a variety of things with which to make a pair of bellows. We eventually found that a very hard knot of a creeping stem of a certain vine plant in the jungle burnt well for a very long time and generated extremely intense heat. When we burnt it with the charcoal of such hardwoods as lime and ironwood, we were able to obtain enough heat for blacksmith work without a pair of bellows.

We were able to do the work only at night. Even though we did it at the bottom of a deep underground shelter, the hammering made a high pitched noise, 'clang . . . clang . . . clang . . .' Just in case, Nakahata and I alternated standing guard outside, while the other one of us helped Shichi forge new implements. Shichi forged tribal machetes, saws and kitchen knives from fragments of bombshells. Shichi also repaired pans and water bottles once they developed holes. To mend an aluminium bottle, for example, he cut a piece of aluminium from the end of a kettle spout and hammered the piece onto the hole like a patch.

We sliced an aluminium water bottle vertically into halves and forged a pan from one of them. We punched many holes in the other half to make a grinder. We also forged needles. We forged needles from an empty cartridge back when we were in the first hole. We sliced an empty cartridge into thin strips, and heated and hammered them into needles. This was easy.

Shichi similarly forged a bayonet into a curved machete, which was more effective in cutting our way through the jungle foliage and vines. Nakahata and I learnt how to forge by observing Shichi's work. This particular experience later helped me enormously during the long period of survival on my own.

Surreptitiously, we also started cultivating root crops near the shelter. We felt genuinely settled in this shelter and physically relieved from strain. Of course, even so, we were always hungry, and

always exhausted from the search for food. The inside of the shelter was so dark even during the daytime that we were unable to play cards, chess (*shōgi*) or checkers (*go*). Whenever we were free, we slept.

Now that we had secured a permanent home, the dominant topic of our occasional discussions was how to get off Guam. Whenever we began to indulge ourselves in speculating over the topic, someone always changed the subject. Nobody knew what another was thinking. But I think that everyone of us knew instinctively how hollow it was to wallow in such speculation and the depth of despair which was sure to follow it. Each of us tried to avoid the suffering such despair would bring.

In terms of recreation, weaving was actually a source of enjoyment. Also, 'I want meat!' 'How about hunting deer?' 'Deer? How shall we hunt deer? Such moments in which we concentrated on devising new methods of hunting animals were some of the occasions when we were able to forget about our misery.

There was a considerable number of deer in the area. They belled and ran through the jungle at night. They gathered beneath breadfruit trees when the fruit was in season. Because we had earlier suffered a defeat in pitting our cunning against that of the wild pigs, we, on this occasion, dug a hole as primitive tribes did. The hole was 3 by 6 by 6 feet deep. We placed a number of pieces of thin bamboo on it and covered them with earth, and put down bait. Next morning, we found the trap had caught something, but there was no deer in the hole. For deer, a hole merely 6 feet deep was no trap. It could stand on its back legs and jump out.

We then dug a deeper hole with even more determination to succeed this time. But in the natural course of action, human beings tended to dig a hole with a wider opening and a narrower bottom. Deer could kick themselves up the slope out of such a hole, even if it was deep enough. For this reason, we failed again. We exercised our brain every day partly because we were hungry and wanted to eat deer, and partly because it was fun to use our brain. Finally, we dug a deep hole with a wider bottom than its opening, and succeeded in hunting. In fact, a ditch intended to prevent tanks from advancing had a wider bottom than opening.

The hole caught a pig first. The pig resisted our attempts to kill it

very noisily and violently. It died after we struck its head three times with a log. Presumably because of fat, it was very difficult to remove the skin. But the testicles, epididymides, brain and tongue of a male pig and the udders of a female were unforgettably delicious.

We drained off the blood of the pig, or indeed, any other captured animal, in the hole. Then we brought it up onto the ground and chopped the meat into pieces. We went to the river in the evening to wash it and sort out its internal organs.

The venison was fatless and had a bad taste, although we had gone to so much trouble to catch it. At the time when we first arrived on Guam in March 1944, 1 pound<sup>1</sup> of venison cost 30 sen (one hundredth of a yen) in a native shop. At that time, I think, 1 pound of horse meat cost 55 sen in Japan. The market price on Guam might have been different from Japan, but it seemed to me that the natives knew the value of venison very well.

It was in the second year of our life in the shelter, which was presumably the autumn of 1960, that I began to live separately from Shichi and Nakahata again. I do not remember what triggered our separation. But if I may explain the reasons by way of illustration, Shichi and Nakahata would like to keep two-thirds of the catch of the day for the next couple of days, whereas I preferred to eat 70 per cent of the catch on the day and wait for a new turn of events in the future. Shichi was a medic and seemed to have planned his diet by calculating nutritional values like so and so calories per toad. In retrospect, I fear now that this sort of half 'science' of nutrition might have doomed the two. I had no educated knowledge of this kind. Wild, as I might appear, I simply acted as my body wanted. In a resulting argument, Shichi told me:

'Because you are the oldest of we three, you will die first. Then, we will look after your tomb. Therefore, . . .'

'How dare you! I will survive on my own.'

Because Shichi went way too far, I was unable to give way. Accordingly, I decided to leave the shelter for good. Still, however badly we quarrelled with each other, we had shared nearly fifteen years of troubles and sorrow. Above all, because of our circumstances the three of us had no other friend on this island. Therefore, when I found a suitable place to dig a shelter in a patch of bamboo

thicket across a stream, 500 yards distant from Shichi and Nakahata's shelter in a straight line; the two visited the site to inspect it and said, 'It is certainly convenient to have a stream at the rear of the house!'

They kindly promised to help me with the digging.

I had three good reasons to have chosen this patch of bamboo thicket. First, it was near a stream. I was able to minimize the risk of leaving my footprints behind even during the rainy season, by going in and out of my shelter by way of the stream. Second, I had learnt earlier in Japan that the ground beneath a patch of bamboo thicket did not crack in an earthquake. As we suffered particularly frequent earthquakes on Guam, this point gave me a sense of security in my life underground. Third, there were coconuts, breadfruit and cycad nuts along the ridges of the same mountain on which the patch of bamboo thicket grew. The location suited my needs.

I started digging alone. Such a patch of bamboo thicket was particularly attractive, because the subterranean stems and roots of bamboos spread even further and held the ground more firmly than a banyan tree. Of course, this made the digging particularly difficult. I took as many as ten nights to dig only ten feet (3 metres) deep. When I had dug about six feet (2 m) horizontally, Shichi and Nakahata came to help me. Shichi dug an underground room 10 feet (3 m) wide, 13 feet (4 m) long and 5 feet (1.5 m) tall. Nakahata carried the earth to a slope in the bamboo thicket, and piled it there. I concentrated on pushing the earth to the entrance and brought it up to the ground. They helped me all through the night, and left for their home the following evening. Their help was hugely appreciated.

I continued to scratch and dig the ground a bit further to make a hearth on one side of the room; shelves for plates, bins, bottles, pans and a variety of other tools on both sides of the room; and a storage area of firewood at the furthest recess of the room; and a ventilation duct. As it was near the stream, I dug a test hole from one side of the room. Good gracious, clean water sprinkled out. I was delighted.

I also dug a room for the lavatory across the entrance shaft, making an up-side-down 'T' shape. It took no less than three months to make it a habitable shelter for one person.

There were subterranean stems and roots of bamboo everywhere. 'You would be in trouble without a cutting instrument.' Shichi kindly left with me a saw which he had forged from a steel helmet.

Then, for the purposes of preventing the hole from collapsing, and lowering the heat inside as well as for aesthetic reasons, I erected a number of bamboo pillars and thrust a number of beams across the ceiling, and covered the whole ceiling and walls with bamboo strips.

I also calculated that I would be able to thrust through a drainage duct about eight feet (2.5 metres) long from the bottom of the lavatory to the stream, in a similar manner in which I thrust a ventilation duct from beneath. In this, I succeeded, too. I piled up some stones around the drainage exit and planted a pandanus tree nearby in order to hide the exit behind its leaves.

I put considerable effort into fitting bamboo covers neatly on the ceilings and walls. However, a great number of cockroaches bred between the earth wall and the bamboo covering. They ate the inside of the bamboo pillars, thereby accelerating the process of natural decay. In the dark, cockroaches bit my skin, opening a hole the size of a wine bottle mouth. Each injury hurt for two days or so. Thus, I had to think about how to get rid of the cockroaches.

My solution to prevent the bamboo pillars from decaying was to place a stone beneath each one. In ways like this, I squeezed out various ideas from inside my little head in order to make the shelter as comfortable as feasible. It really took well over five years to complete this shelter.

In fact, due to the humidity during the rainy season, I had to replace the whole bamboo covers on the ceiling once a year. I had to clean the drains, especially the water closet *à la mode de Yokoi*, I mean, to flush away its sediments in a manner in which nobody could spot my presence. I was thus forced to accept the realization that owning a 'house' and maintaining it on my own was harder than I had ever imagined. I grew weary and sighed.

Once I started living on my own in this shelter, I became even more cautious and meticulous than ever before. I restrained myself from picking lots of fruit and nuts from a single tree, diversifying

the sources of harvest. I erased my footprints as carefully as possible lest the enemy discover this house which I had created after so much hardship.

Naturally, my activities slowed down and became less efficient. I had to do everything on my own. Time flew.

The farm of thorny jungle potatoes, which the three of us started cultivating some time earlier, remained our common property. As the harvest season approached, new potatoes pushed the earth above them upwards so that our presence became easily detectable from the natives' point of view. At first, we hid them under the earth and weed roots, or under dead wood felled by a typhoon (as a hurricane in the Pacific is called). This actually appeared rather artificial. After careful consideration, we decided to make a tube by removing the inside of the stem of a dead betel palm tree, and let a bud grow inside the tube.

I cultivated jungle potatoes near my shelter, too, in the same way. A bud naturally pursued light and grew upwards through a betel stem tube. When new potatoes began to push the earth upwards, I covered them with tree branches and leaves. I ate two-thirds of each new potato and left the top one third to be dried under the sun in order to keep it as a seed potato for the next year. I planted it in the budding season and succeeded in obtaining a new generation of potatoes. In this, I followed the way in which a seed potato was obtained in my home village in Japan.

When creeping stems of a jungle potato were eaten by snails or deer, while they were growing, I was only able to harvest seed potatoes for the next year. When a typhoon struck the island, occasionally, I was only able to obtain smaller potatoes than seed potatoes. When nothing adversely affected their growth, I was able to harvest three times as many potatoes than the seed potatoes. It was a great pleasure and consolation to see the growth of jungle potatoes.

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I think that it was already 1963 when we were living separately. Shichi and Nakahata suddenly visited me and said, 'We shall seriously try to get off this island again, shall we?'

By that time, I had given up my earlier hope of the Japanese Army coming back to rescue us. I agreed with them. While we were living together, we were suffering from homesickness and discussed mostly how to get off Guam. By then, it seemed to us it was high time to act, rather than to talk. Nobody wanted to believe that Japan had been defeated. However, a number of things had already led me to realize that Japan had been defeated. For example, there were no Japanese aircraft flying over us. All the aeroplanes which we saw were American ones. Above all, they were no longer propeller-driven aircraft. They were hugely faster and of a completely different type, flying straight at an enormous speed and leaving a sharp and terrible high-pitched noise behind. Even so, it was beyond my comprehension that Japan had suffered such a thorough defeat as I realized for the first time after my return.

We began to plan how to get off Guam. Our foremost and greatest concern was how to escape the notice of the Americans. We decided to make a raft with bamboo to drift out to sea. One hundred coconuts appeared to be sufficient to keep us away from thirst for a month. Fried breadfruit and cycad nuts were expected to feed us sufficiently for that length of time. But from where should we get off?

‘We shall scout the coastline, anyway, shan’t we?’

We then prepared for a long expedition. I was assigned to knit new shoes for all of us. This was because sandals did not protect our toes from thatch scratches from the vegetation. I made soles from coconut shells and knitted shoes. They did not look elegant, but they functioned appropriately as proper shoes. We carried breadfruit powder as portable food, and went upstream by the River Talofofu. Our destination was Mt Lamlam, the highest mountain on Guam. In a place where we were unable to make a fire to cook, we ate the breadfruit powder as it was. Hiding ourselves behind foxtail grasses during the daytime, we walked for a number of nights. Our steps were accelerated with hope.

From the top of Mt Lamlam, we had a panoramic view of the southern part of the west coast. However, unexpectedly, two new fine roads had been constructed along the coast. Here and there, new construction work using dynamite was underway.

‘There is no place from which we can get off. There is not even a single palm tree left.’

My legs began to tremble. I buried my head under my arms. I think that my two other colleagues shared the same sense of despair. When I raised my head to examine the situation more carefully, the coast was actually a steep cliff. Japan was located to the far north of this island. Taking into account the sea current, this was the only place to get off for Japan. There was no alternative.

How to return to Japan without becoming a prisoner of war?

We had to sail across the sea. There was no solid surface on which we could walk or run. For these eighteen years, we had been yearning to see our parents smiling at us.

‘We are finished, aren’t we? We are becoming manure for palm trees here, aren’t we?’

Finally, Nakahata expressed the feeling which all of us had in our minds. Even the resilient Shichi was unable to respond.

Nobody could walk on water. But there was no material left with which to make a raft in the area.

‘Who on earth would have endured the survival struggle in the jungle up to now merely to surrender now? We would rather die if there is no prospect for the future. It is easier to die than to live!’

Tears ran down our cheeks. We collapsed on the ground and wept.

We should have attempted to get off at least five or ten years earlier. The whole island had been so quickly developed that there was no way in which we could possibly get off it without being detected by the enemy.

If there had been someone who could tell us at that moment in a manner through which we could understand what had been happening since the end of the war, we would have, naturally, sought out and begged the Americans for help, or as the case might be, even from Japanese tourists on buses. Then, all of us would have been able to go back alive together.

I know that this is a vain regret. However, the very army cadres who had taught us and impressed on us not to surrender in accordance with Code 2, Article 8 of the War Ministry’s 1941 Codes of Conduct in Battle, had, in fact, raised a white flag and surrendered

with only a handful of men near them, and safely returned to Japan to lead a comfortable life. Alas!

It was perhaps the trend of the times but those who faithfully followed the education of the time were really stupid.

We, the three on Guam, were unable to know what was happening outside. Thoroughly disappointed, we dragged our heavy legs towards our empty underground shelters where no one existed who could welcome us back. We tried to suppress and crush the deep sense of despair which kept overtaking us.

I was lucky because I was still able to survive and go back alive in the end.

However, Shichi and Nakahata were only able to go home as skulls and bones. How ardently they had longed for their homes! I cannot resist my desire to shout aloud in the hearing of somebody, their lamentation.

## CHAPTER 13

# THE DEATH OF MY LAST COLLEAGUES c. 1962–1964



The year in which we had to give up getting off Guam – I think it was 1963 – remained quiet until the summer. I was living my ordinary day-to-day life underground as before, which was monotonous but regular.

Towards the end of the summer, the morning sky looked threatening. As a few typhoons visited this island every year, I was not seriously worried by that, and kept on sleeping in the hole. Gradually, however, the noise of the wind intensified. It seemed that there was not so much rainfall. Simply, the wind blew very violently.<sup>1</sup>

Next morning, I spied from the entrance what had happened outside. All the bamboo leaves had been blown off. Many bamboos were felled like flattened foxtail grasses. Dead bamboo had disappeared. It was a disaster. The area used to be dark even during the daytime under the bamboo foliage. It was then as bright as an open space.

In the meantime, the wind became stronger again. I heard trees and bamboo being broken and torn apart, making a huge, terrible noise. While I was frightened by the powerful storm, the rain began to pour. Within thirty minutes, the stream at the rear of my hole rose. Water flew throughout the bamboo thicket like a large river.

My underground house was, not surprisingly, inundated up to 8 inches (20 cm) above the floor. The floor boards floated on the water. Water leaked also from the ceilings, and ran onto the drying shelves above the hearth. Drops began to fall upon the hearth. I had few trays or buckets to cover the hearth. I therefore used all sorts of

household equipment to defend the hearth from the invading water.

The matter of utmost strategic significance for my life underground at that stage was fire. I ignited as many as three or four cord wicks and hung them from shelves; lighted and hung an emergency palm oil lump to light the room; and with this illumination, I embarked on the cleaning of the lavatory.

I thought that because of the torrents of water running along the stream at that time, I could throw away the sediments of the lavatory without being detected by the enemy. I shovelled the sediments using a bamboo pole with a fragment of a bombshell tied to its end; went, completely naked, out of the hole; and frantically proceeded to throw the rubbish away into the river. Yes, I made my lavatory to be a sort of water closet, but because bamboo roots filled its sink and drainage duct and prevented the flow thereby, I had no choice but to utilize my tribal machete, which I used as a kitchen knife, in order to cut roots and clear the sink and drain. I then placed the roots on a cooking pan to carry and throw them away into the river. Under the circumstances, I had to set aside any worry about the sanitary consequences of this course of action.

I cleaned my 'water closet' whenever a typhoon raised the river water. Shichi and Nakahata's lavatory was a mere tank without any drainage. Therefore, they pulled the excrement out with a large bamboo scoop, and dug holes in the jungle to dispose of it about once a year or so. They had to do so in a manner in which no enemy could realize their presence.

An ordinary typhoon on Guam caused lots of rainfall for a few days. However, this particular typhoon generated unprecedented, extremely powerful winds, sustained over a week. It did not rain so much. After the storm, the entire piece of jungle had been flattened to appear like a huge carpet of fallen leaves.

Foxtail grasses were wiped out from the surface of the earth, big old trees were rooted out, bamboo was torn and broken, and even some underground stems on which a few pieces of bamboo were growing had been gouged out of the earth. All the trees sustained severe damage. It was by far the most violent super-typhoon I had ever experienced.

How had the poor little birds survived this typhoon? Very few of them were seen after the typhoon.

This typhoon had also blown away such little food as I had been able to gather in the jungle. Cycad nuts had been torn from the trees before they had ripened. Breadfruit trees were rendered bare. Shell-snails had disappeared. Presumably they were washed away. The stream at the rear of my house had changed its shape. Its bottom had been deeply gouged. No weeds survived on the river bank which had provided fish (eels) with food and shelter. What should I eat?

My underground shelter was thoroughly soaked. There was no place to lie down or even to sit. Firewood became too damp to burn.

My first task after the typhoon was to blockade any passage through the devastated bamboo thicket, to prevent anyone from approaching my hole, and to hide my hole behind some fallen bamboo. I laid down fallen pieces of bamboo as naturally as possible. I replanted small pandanus trees and pandanus-like vines in order to camouflage the surrounding area of the hole.

After having ensured the security of my house, I went to see what had happened to Shichi and Nakahata.

‘As the sustained winds swung the banyan tree above,’ they said, ‘its roots were also moved, causing the entire hole to quake as if in an earthquake.’

They were so frightened that they ‘climbed and kept clinging on the banyan tree and kept shivering there’. ‘Smoke,’ they said, ‘presumably from a native hamlet more than 2 to 3 miles (4–5 km) away was carried to us across mountains and frightened us.’ They looked truly and thoroughly dejected and dispirited. They said that their hearth fire had been extinguished, and they were nibbling at fallen green coconuts and small root crops without cooking them. In fact, every tree in the area surrounding their hole had its branches ripped off and was standing like a pole. The ground was covered with fallen leaves and large fallen trees. Therefore, it had taken me about three times as long as usual to reach there.

I lit their cord wick from my own cord wick. They said that one of them was intending to visit me to ask for fire that evening.

For us, fire was next in importance to life itself. At an earlier time, when we still had a lens, we picked out a bit of powder from a cartridge, placed the powder on a coconut shell, and focused the sun's light on the powder with the lens. The powder then quickly caught fire and burnt the coconut shell. We then quickly transferred the fire from the coconut shell to a cord wick made from coconut shell fibres. While we were living in a hut above the ground, we placed a large coil of cord wick on a shelf and hung about 40 inches (1 metre) of the cord wick from the shelf, and pulled it longer from time to time during wakeful spells in the course of our nap. We counted hours from the length of a cord wick which had burnt.

When we went out of the shelter for fishing and gathering, we covered some incandescent charcoals in the hearth with ashes to maintain the fire. Once the fire died out for whatever reasons, it was impossible to make a fire with a lens at night. When we went fishing, hunting and gathering, we were often unable to return to the shelter for days. Therefore, we carried a smouldering cord wick, coiled around a bamboo cylinder, with its ignited part hanging inside the cylinder. A bamboo stem was an ideal material with which to make such a cylinder, because the bamboo was hollow between the nodes. We needed to pull the cord wick inside the cylinder longer from time to time lest the fire die out. We covered the bamboo cylinder fully with betel palm barks in order to keep it dry against rain and damp. Just in case, were the fire in such a cylinder to die out, we made sure that two of us carried a smouldering cord wick each.

I had had a single-sized lens until I lost it in the fire when my hut was burnt down. That lens did not work well under clouds. Therefore, from quite early on, I had been thinking about how to make a fire. I at least kept dead charcoal after cooking on the hearth because it quickly caught fire from a smouldering cord wick. I carried a dead piece of charcoal with me on my way to fishing and gathering. When I needed a fire, I gathered some dead wood, I put a smouldering cord wick onto the dead piece of charcoal among the pieces of dead wood, and blew hard. The fire was easily transferred from the cord wick to the piece of charcoal and then on to the dead wood.

During the war, people in Japan also complained about the shortage of matches. They should have carried a cord wick to ignite a

piece of charcoal in a brazier or a piece of cigarette. They would have been able to make a good quality cord wick from a piece of cotton rag.

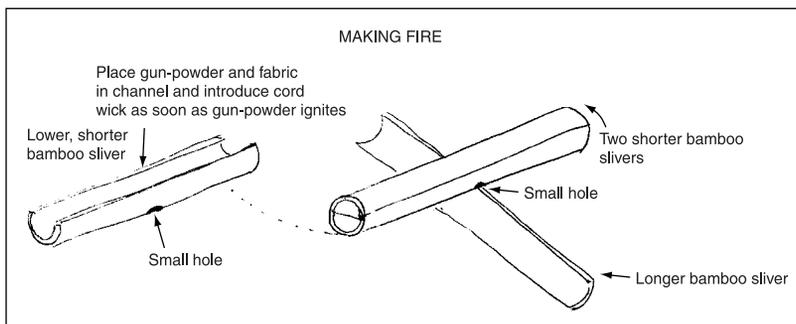
However careful I was, the fire died out a few times each year. For example, if a cord wick hung from a tree branch touched the stem covered with night dew while I was sleeping, the fire died. A piece of charcoal in the hearth too quickly burnt down to mere ashes if its disintegration was not controlled by an ash covering. A piece of charcoal from a coconut shell maintained a fire for a very long time. It was thin, but hard. It kept the fire going for a couple of days beneath the hearth ashes. Of course, it quickly burnt to ashes within ten minutes once exposed to the open air.

As long as I had a lens, I was dependent on it to make a fire even though I had been looking for other means with which to do so.

After I lost the lens, I was compelled by necessity to find an alternative. I tried firestones (flint) as I knew that people used to make sparks by striking them together. But it was extremely difficult to find suitable material which such sparks could ignite, and how to ignite any such material with sparks. Also, I remembered the practice of 'fire cutting' at the Great Shrine of Izumo (in Shimane Prefecture on the western coast of the Sea of Japan), which I imagined to have involved the rubbing together of two pieces of hard wood to make a fire. I therefore drilled a stick of hard wood on a board of hard wood. I also coiled a wire on a piece of hard wood and rubbed it against another piece of hard wood. Either way, black smoke emerged. I quickly put some cotton gunpowder onto the source of the smoke. However, the powder did not catch fire. The gunpowder was not ignited without a considerable degree of heat.

One day, I got an idea from the cause of forest fires. I placed a strip of the hard bark of a betel palm vertically, and another strip of the same bark on it horizontally to make a cross, grabbed both ends of the horizontal strip and rubbed it on the vertical strip as hard as possible. The rubbed surface was blackened with heat. I thought that I had come very near to creating fire in this way, and tried it again with pieces of dead bamboo. However, the bamboo strip easily bent so that I was unable to concentrate my force on a single point.

I used bamboo because Nihei (an earlier civilian member of my group around 1945) had said, 'the natives make a fire with two pieces of bamboo even without gunpowder. I saw them competing with each other over how fast they could ignite a piece of bamboo in that way.' However, we had been too poorly fed to exert the necessary force to do such things. Nihei, therefore, thought about using gunpowder.



The method which succeeded in making a fire was this: prepare a quarter or a sixth vertical sliver of a bamboo cylinder about 20 inches (50 cm) long; smooth one of the longitudinal sections of the sliver; prepare a further two similar vertical slivers of a bamboo cylinder about 10 inches (25 cm) long; make a small and horizontally long elliptical hole at the centre of one of the shorter slivers; place some soft tissues of the inner surface of a coconut shell and gunpowder on the concave surface of the holed sliver; place another shorter sliver on it to fix the soft tissues and gunpowder; push one end of the longer sliver onto the wall and sustain the other end with my stomach; grip the ends of the two shorter slivers with both hands, place the hole of the lower shorter sliver on the smoothed longitudinal section of the longer sliver to make a cross; start rubbing by moving the shorter slices backwards and forwards on the section of the longer slice, softly at first, and gradually with intensified strength. The cotton powder on the holed shorter slice caught fire within five minutes with this method. As soon as the gunpowder is ignited, place a cord wick on it and blow on the fire so it goes onto the cord wick.

Anyway, after the super-typhoon, we were only able to gather green coconuts which had been torn off the palm trees. Green coconuts were not digestible. After having continuously eaten them for an entire week, we became unable to eat any more of them because of the damage done to our stomachs. So, we gathered baby coconuts instead, which the natives called 'fafa', and grew shortly after the palms bloomed. These baby coconuts helped us survive during the post-typhoon famine.

Because we were unable to find any other food even when we ventured to far away places in search of food, each of us ate about ten baby coconuts a day to survive. Eventually the baby coconuts ran out, and we sometimes ate a papaya tree's stem by removing its bark and grinding the stem tissues.

I think that some Japanese had been surviving until this super-typhoon and that most of them died from starvation after it. I am afraid that their number might not have been small. They would have adopted the wild animals' way of living rather than that of a human being to survive. They would have dreamt of their homeland, and perished in vain in isolation after the typhoon.

It was the beginning of 1964 when Shichi and Nakahata unexpectedly visited me in the afternoon. I did not know that it was the new year. First, Shichi alone came down to my hole, and whispered to me:

'I am afraid that Nakahata's memory fails him too often recently. He does not remember what he has said just now. He tends to lose his belongings whenever we go out in search of food. He may not survive for long.' Shichi himself seemed to me to have been badly worn out, too.

From earliest times, it was often said that the failure of memory was a sign of approaching death. I was barely able to listen to this grisly piece of information about Nakahata, who was much younger than I was. Shichi was unable to say such things in the presence of Nakahata himself, and kept him waiting outside the hole. However, Nakahata came down into the hole saying, 'Please let me in now. I can no longer bear mosquito bites.'

I happened to be about to cook something at that moment, and said,

'Let us have dinner together'.

‘We have our own foodstuff with us,’ they said, ‘therefore, if you could allow us to cook them on our own here, . . .’

They began to cook and said,

‘Squad Leader, would you mind going and catching some toads for us?’

As they had requested me to do so, I went to the stream and caught four toads. They boiled the toads with three spoonfuls of cycad powder.

Both Shichi and Nakahata ate only a cup of thick soup without touching the meat, and said,

‘Squad Leader, please eat the meat.’

I thought this very strange and feared that they had been physically weakened and so were unable to digest the meat.

I think it impossible for anyone who has no such experience to comprehend this, but the heat being generated by the cooking activities inside such a small underground room was truly unbearable. It was well over 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius). On top of that the smoke filled the room to the point of suffocating us. We just pushed our noses onto the floor because the smoke tended to go upwards leaving a thin layer of breathable air above the surface of the floor. In this posture, we patiently endured the unbearable heat and suffocating smoke.

As it was so hot inside the hole, I used to take a bath in the stream near my hole about four times a day to cool my body. By that time, Shichi had stopped bathing in a river due to a chill. Even so, Shichi went to bathe in the stream on this occasion due to the intense cooking heat in my hole. But when he came back from bathing, he suffered from a chill. I put my clothing on him. At this moment, I caught sight of the Moon through the entrance hall and judging from the shape and angle of the Moon, I remember that it was the fifth day of the first month. The chill was evidence of Shichi’s deteriorating health. I became seriously concerned about both Shichi and Nakahata, but I was unable to help. Shichi and Nakahata stayed with me that night and went home next morning without eating breakfast. As Shichi had told me, Nakahata kept repeating the same things many times. He appeared very desolate when he went back.

‘Please erase our footprints lest the enemy find your hole’, Shichi asked me, ‘because we got lost on our way coming here’.

I went out to see them off.

‘I will visit you on the fifteenth night of the new year,’<sup>2</sup> I promised.

‘You are welcome,’ they said, ‘we will cook a special dinner for you.’

Then they left.

I went out to erase their footprints. On my way back to my hole, I picked up some small shell-snails to cook and eat. ‘Shichi and Nakahata would not be able to maintain any balanced nutrition with such a poor appetite . . .’ I kept worrying about their health.

Unfortunately, it began to rain from the day after their departure and kept on raining incessantly, and prevented me from visiting them on the fifteenth night. I had to wait for a further ten days to see a clear sky. I left my hole at about 3.30 p.m. for their hole, although the sky was still light and it was a bit risky to go out. Their hole was 500 yards (metres) distant from my one in a straight line, but I had to go round a patch of jungle. The sun was only 7 feet above the horizon when I reached their hole, therefore. I carried with me a bamboo cylinder to keep a live cord wick, a cage to catch shell-snails and a portable rice cooker.

As usual, I said, ‘Oy!’ to them from the entrance. There was no response. ‘Oy!’ I repeated several times to no avail. As the weather was fine that day, I thought that Shichi and Nakahata were just fast asleep. There was actually a strange smell, like that of rotten flesh from inside the hole. But at that moment, I simply thought that they had cooked toads or chicken. I did not take the smell seriously.

I then entered the patch of jungle and caught some shell-snails to prepare for *our* dinner. As the sun was setting, I came back to their hole, and said, ‘Oy!’ to them again. There was no reply.

‘They are still deeply asleep, aren’t they?’

I pulled out the live cord wick from the bamboo cylinder and went down the ladder. As I had been familiar with the interior of the hole, I groped through the tunnel. I then touched some rolling items. It was too dark to ascertain what they were. I continued to grope to find the hearth utterly cold. I quickly picked up a piece of

charcoal from beneath the hearth ashes, ignited it with my cord wick and illuminated the room.

I was then horrified to realize that the rolling items which I had touched on my way, turned out to be Shichi's and Nakahata's skulls. The two laid down side by side with each one's head paralleling the other one's feet.

At first, I feared that they had been killed by the enemy. However, when I calmed myself down and carefully examined the situation, there was no sign of enemy attacks inside the hole. Their household utensils remained intact. They died as they usually slept. There was no trace of any agony. I did not know what they died of. But if they had been shot or stabbed, their blood should have stained their clothing. But there was no stain of blood on their clothing, although it was already worn out.

'Strange.'

I was unable to ascertain the cause of their death. I ought to have stayed with them overnight under usual circumstances. However, if they had been killed, it was very dangerous for me to stay any longer. Therefore, I picked up Shichi's talisman which had a thousand stitches made by a thousand different individuals, and was believed to fend off that number of calamities, and which Shichi always kept with him, and a bamboo cylinder containing Japan's rising sun flag as keepsakes for Shichi and Nakahata's bereaved families in case I was able to return home alive. I left their hole as it was because there was no urgent necessity to sort out the interior.

It was already dark outside. I stretched some creeping vines across the entrance hole as naturally as possible and placed some obstructions over the entrance with pandanus leaves before I left. I did so because if the enemy came, they would destroy the vines or disturb the pandanus leaves.

I thought that I was all right but I lost my way in the middle of the reeds. I had actually been more upset and agitated than I thought. I wandered in the reeds for a while until the noise of a stream reached my ears. I followed the noise to arrive at the stream which led me to my hole. As soon as I reached my hole, I collapsed.

'Shall I die, too?' It seemed better to die to end my suffering

rather than to wait alone here for the same end as theirs, which was sure to befall me at some point in the future.

I felt lonely, being deprived of every warmth from inside my heart. I buried my head under my arms, sitting idly, wondering what to do, to be or not to be, in utter confusion.

I did not know how many hours had passed. I was sitting without eating or sleeping, being overwhelmed by desperate loneliness. I no longer had anyone to rely on and to talk to. Gradually, I was buoyed up by the realization that ‘I have to report about Shichi’s and Nakahata’s final end to their families. If I die here, every effort which has kept me surviving so far would have been fruitless.’

I persuaded myself to live.

For two days, their demise dominated my mind. At the same time, I kept considering how to survive on my own now that I had been truly rendered alone. However, no good idea came to my mind except that I had no choice but to leave and accept everything as it turned out: *Che sera, sera*, Whatever will be, will be . . .

I became unable to resist my desire to go and see their hole again on the third day. I went there with a bottle of water and some flowers. I was relieved to see that the vines and pandanus leaves over the entrance remained intact. As I had broken their ladder when I climbed out of their hole the other night, I carried my own rope ladder with me, suspended it from the entrance, and descended into the hole. I sat beside the bodies of Shichi and Nakahata, clasped my hands, and pledged, ‘I will bring your bones back to Japan, surely.’

After careful consideration, I decided to leave their remains there. I thought about bringing their remains into my hole and enshrining them there. But I remembered that we had discussed, when we dug this hole, that we should make this hole our graveyard when our lives reached the end. If Shichi and Nakahata had been sleeping peacefully here with that intention, I thought that I ought not to disturb their peace for the moment. Instead, I should visit here from time to time to dedicate bunches of wild flowers for them.

Because I feared that the enemy might discover this hole, I closed the entrance and the ventilation duct with stones. I cannot describe the lonely emotion I had when I had closed the openings.

Thereafter, whenever I went as far as their area in search of food, I always dedicated flowers for them, clasped my hands and prayed, 'Please watch over my survival here.'

I was the oldest of the three. We survived as long as twenty years as if we had been brothers related by blood. Due to human fallibility, we became separated for the most trivial reasons for the last several years. If we had lived together, you would not have suffered such a lonely death. I am sorry that I was unable to reach out to help you. As things stand as they are now, if I am at all able to return home alive, I will make sure to bring both of you back to your parents.

So did I determine the course of my thinking and made this pledge. After the death of Shichi and Nakahata, I spent a further eight years on Guam in complete solitude. Thereafter, I never saw another Japanese soldier nor any trace of one's existence in the jungle. I thought that I absolutely had to return to Japan by any means possible to report to the government about those tens of thousands of people who had perished in the battle on Guam, how they fought and how they died, what a miserable defeat and what a deplorable death they experienced. I encouraged myself by telling myself that there was no one else left to do this job.

I tried to think in this way. However, at the same time, I knew better than anyone else that my hope of returning home safely was as chimerical as a mirage.

## CHAPTER 14

# EIGHT YEARS IN SOLITUDE (c. 1964 – 1971)



The eight years in solitude after I had lost Shichi and Nakahata were twice as difficult and painful as the previous score of years had been.

Around 1965, from a point some fifty yards away from my underground shelter, I saw a petrol tank of some sort and buildings, which looked like aircraft hangars or barracks, being built at the bottom of Pasture Hill.

Before that, the only man-made structures which came into my sight were distant steel electricity pylons which the Americans built soon after their invasion, from the bottom of Pasture Hill to its top, where they also built a sentry box. The sentry box was brightly lit by electricity at night. After I was discovered, I was told that the buildings which were constructed around 1965 were, in fact, a gas tank and a block of flats for local inhabitants. I had been convinced that these were US military airfield facilities. So long as I assumed that they belonged to the enemy, they were nothing to do with me, hardly providing me with any opportunity to grasp the true situation on the island, even if they were brightly lit at night.

My only hope at that time was based on a piece of information I obtained from a newspaper published in Saipan back in July 1945, reporting developments towards the end of the war. That was the only piece of outside information available to me, whether I believed it or not. Twenty years thereafter, I imagined that the war had probably ended and peace had been concluded. Then, I thought that the Japanese troops would eventually come back here to

repatriate us from the front. Then, I might be able to go home without becoming a prisoner of war. I thus persuaded myself that I had to survive at any cost until that eventuality.

In fact, I was always busy with leading my day-to-day life. After the huge typhoon in 196(2),<sup>1</sup> I increasingly suffered from a lack of food. I had to make everything on my own; and from time to time repair my underground house. Above all, I had to be always vigilant concerning every possible enemy movement. Therefore, I had actually little time to ponder my future.

In retrospect, it might have been actually good for my mental condition to keep myself thoroughly occupied with day-to-day business: weaving cloth, tailoring clothing, making sandals, cord wicks, fishing cages, etc., planting root crops, fishing in the river. I derived simple delight and satisfaction from every moment of these activities. I concentrated on surviving every day and night, entirely on my own, enduring complete solitude.

I survived, enduring the unendurable, forbearing the unforbearable,<sup>2</sup> literally on the borderline of survival. I was in need of everything. While being condemned to such severe deprivation, my utmost concern had always been the maintenance of fire. Whenever the hearth fire was allowed to die down inadvertently due to the leaking of rains or inundation, or whenever the fire on a cord wick was extinguished by mistake, I had to make a fire with three bamboo slivers in the manner which I explained in the previous chapter. But I was beginning to notice the waning strength of my body which reduced my ability to rub the bamboo slivers with enough vigour. Also, early on, a cartridge-full of cotton gunpowder was sufficient to make a fire seven to eight times with this method. However, the rate of failure seemed to have increased as my body's strength waned. Towards the end of my life on Guam, I was able to make a fire only twice at the most with the same one cartridge-full of gunpowder. The cartridges were running out. When I thought about how to make a fire, the future seemed entirely unworkable.

However, I thought that it was pointless to ponder over this and worry about the future. Every morning, I began cooking at the time when the earliest regular flight flew over me. After an hour of cooking, my underground hole was filled with heat and smoke and I

felt as if I had been boiled in oil in the manner in which Goemon Ishikawa, a sixteenth-century Japanese robber, had been executed. I therefore bathed in the stream as many as four times every night in order to cool my body. The bathing was said to have helped maintain my skin clean and to have been good for my health. But I had simply been compelled by necessity to do so.

After my enforced solitude, I rarely went beyond the immediate vicinity. I knew where nuts and fruit were. I went to gather them as well as firewood after sunset. At night, the underground shelter was utterly dark and I had nothing to do but to sleep. However, because it was so hot, I was barely able to sleep well. I went to the stream to take a bath every two and a half hours or so. During the daytime, I wove cloth, and made a rope right under the entrance shaft, occasionally going out to take a nap in the middle of foxtail grasses in the sun. Even then, perhaps because I remained instinctively so vigilant, I was unable to sleep properly. Therefore, since the US invasion of Guam in 1944, I had never on any single occasion slept in a relaxed fashion.

Presumably because I had had difficulties finding food ever since the super-typhoon of 196(2),<sup>3</sup> I once suffered from malnutrition. I was slow to realize that I was losing strength, probably because of my mental determination. But gradually, I began to find walking increasingly hard, and fainted and fell down after about a mile of walking. I took a rest for a while and started walking again in search of food. I picked sprouts of young weeds, selecting those which bore some traces of bites by animals, because the animals did not eat poisonous ones. I boiled such edible weeds to eat. I remained utterly hungry all the time. I ate everything which looked safe to eat after having heated it. However, I was unable to stop the decline of my bodily strength.

About a year after the devastating typhoon, I caught sight of a few breadfruit on a tree for the first time. I was very much delighted and approached the tree to climb it. No matter how strongly my mind desired to reach the breadfruit, nonetheless, my body stubbornly refused to do so. I gave myself a rest for a while under the tree, which I then managed to climb. I picked the breadfruit. I caught sight of a further few breadfruit on another tree near there. I

wanted to take them, too. But I had absolutely no strength to do so. Nor had I strength left to climb down the tree. I more-or-less slid down the tree and just about kept myself supported, by crouching down at the bottom of the tree.

My body completely refused to move and go home. Although I took a rest for a long while again, I found even three or four breadfruit too heavy to carry. The distance to my hole was about 0.6 mile (1 km). I was utterly groggy and fought my way, tottering and reeling, towards the hole. Near my hole, my body finally collapsed. I was unable to rise from the ground for about half an hour. Gradually, I began to suffer from a chill. I thought that I was finished.

‘No! I cannot die here. I cannot expose my corpse to the enemy. I must go back to my hole to die.’

I squeezed out the last ounce of my strength to crawl back to my hole and managed to lie down there. My whole body was numbed and the chill became more and more severe.

‘Oh, my goodness! I am finished. I have so far managed to survive but all is coming to nothing now, is it?’

I regretted that I had no more strength. I sipped water thinking it was the last sip of water before my death. I closed my eyes, lying down with a still sense of imminent death.

An unknown length of time elapsed.

I regained consciousness at daybreak. My body was no longer numb. I was alive in an ordinary condition as before.

‘Good gracious! I am still alive!’

I was delighted and amazed to discover that I was alive.

The next moment, my realization that I had not erased my footprints made it imperative that I raise myself up. I quickly went out to erase them all the way from the breadfruit tree to my hole. I then peeled the rind of breadfruit, cooked it with coconut milk on charcoals and ate it. I think I passed the critical point then.

Thereafter, I felt a chill a few times a day for about six months. But I was gradually recovering little by little.

Perhaps, however, due to the fatigue after this malnutrition or due to aging, I subsequently suffered from a stomach ulcer twice. I had never suffered from any serious illness before. I healed the ulcer twice without any drug and without anyone to attend to me.

I think it was November 1970. But my calendar was based on my observation of the waxing and waning of the Moon, so that it was six months ahead when I was discovered in 1972. Therefore, it might have been May 1970. The causes of the inaccuracy in my calendar were: firstly that it was a lunar calendar; secondly that it rained often from around 1970 and the distinction between the dry season from March to May and the rainy season was blurred; thirdly that breadfruit trees occasionally bore fruit twice a year; and generally that this tropical island had no distinct seasons as in Japan. It was always summer throughout the year with the temperature constantly at around 80 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (27 to 28 degrees Celsius).<sup>4</sup>

The cause of the first stomach ulcer was not ascertained. One day, quite unexpectedly, I had an utterly black stool.<sup>5</sup> I suffered a sharp thumping pain at the pit of my stomach. Because I was eating wild breadfruits as my staple food at that time, perhaps its harshness might have affected me adversely. I had actually prepared some home-made medicine: burnt ashes of green coconut shells to bind the bowel; dried livers of eels and toads to help digestion; toad's grease and coconut oil to treat a minor cut, etc. But I had nothing to stop stomach-ache, and no knowledge of herbs.

Shichi was a medic but he was no longer alive by then. I was no longer able to ask for his advice. I had some experience in the art of tailoring, but I had absolutely no experience in medicine. I did not know what to do.

All I was able to do was this: I boiled water in a water bottle; wrapped the bottle in some clothing, placed it on my stomach and pressed it hard to counteract the pain; I continued lying down.

Whenever I ate something, my stomach ached. However, it was clear that I was unable to survive without eating. I preferred death by eating to death by starvation. Of course, I boiled everything very thoroughly until it became very soft and easy to digest.

Nevertheless, I lost strength day by day. I was caught by despair. I settled into a kind of resigned anticipation of death. Even so, I had no desire to commit suicide. Rather, I remembered that my mother, who had been worshipping Mt Ontake (a volcano in the north of my home in Nagoya) as a deity, used to tell me when I was young

that I was the incarnation of that volcano deity. Of course, my mother would not come here physically to look after me. But I believed that she was always with me and looking after me, and therefore, that I would never die. I tried to encourage myself by thinking that the mind ruled the body, and, therefore, that a strong mind could defeat bodily illness.

Also, I believed that the spirits of a countless number of my fellow comrades who had died on Guam were protecting me. This was not a fantasy. For example, when I went to search for food, I was able to find the exact spot where I was considering in my mind to go; when I was driven by my desire to eat fish, I was able to catch as many fish as I wanted in the place where I was somehow led to go; I found coconuts in the place to which I was instinctively led. I often had these kinds of strange experiences.

I did not have any particular faith or religion. But when I was severely depressed, I recited quietly the Buddhist verses<sup>6</sup> and sutras<sup>7</sup> which I had learnt by heart in my childhood.

In terms of religion, I think it is sufficient in so far as one prays with hands clasped at some invisible being which he thinks proper, in order to compose himself.

When I was fighting against my illness, wondering in despair if I was going to die and lamenting my helplessness, I recited, unconsciously, the Buddhist verses. I did not do it in a calculating way. I was not intending to rely on someone nor was I expecting death to be imminent. Simply, the verses automatically came out of my mouth. When I was in this sort of state of mind, I was calm and settled, rather than full of fear, and was able to see my circumstances almost like those of another person.

It is difficult to explain such a state of mind. To illustrate the point, when I considered that I was lying down at the bottom of beautifully transparent clear water, I felt that there was nothing to fear, and strangely, I was freed from worries about life and death. Perhaps, I had simply become bold and settled.

The first stomach ulcer took about three months to heal. One day, when I became able to walk a bit again and tottered unsteadily in search of coconuts, six baby pigs ran towards me. Their mother ran alongside them. I had no machete with me so that I gave up the

idea of catching her. Instead, I grabbed two baby pigs with my hands and put them into my sack. Their mother heard the two babies squealing and charged at me very determinedly with enormous speed. I jumped to the side in order to escape from her powerful charge. In the meantime, the rest of the baby pigs ran away deep into the jungle.

As soon as I returned to my hole, I cooked one of the baby pigs. I removed the skin and boiled the meat with the bones thoroughly. The pork was very delicious and had a salty taste. It was soft, had no fat and no hard stringy tissues. It was a wonderful dinner of the kind which I was rarely able to eat.

That pig seemed to have been only three or four days old and about 8 inches (20 cm) long. I kept and fed the other baby pig in the hole. It grunted every time I fed it. I feared the noise coming out of the hole and therefore, I ate that pig, too. Presumably because I was thus able to achieve a good nutritional balance by eating them, I began to recover gradually.

Thereafter, I paid more attention to my diet than before, and took care to take animal protein from eels and shrimps. Eels on Guam were less fatty than those in Japan. I therefore chopped them into pieces and either boiled or grilled them to eat. I ate their livers without cooking them. I used to dry shrimps to prepare stock from them. After the first stomach ulcer, I began to boil shrimps to eat them. Unlike the Japanese eels, the bones of an eel on Guam were too hard to eat, and I threw them away. But I think that I was able to obtain enough calcium from shrimps.<sup>8</sup>

I also caught wild cats with a rat trap and ate them. They, even very fat-looking cats, had actually little fat beneath the skin, explaining why they hated cold weather. Cat meat was fatless, soft and light pink. It looked and tasted delicious.

Still, my appetite was gradually waning. I used to compete with Shichi and Nakahata concerning how many baked breadfruit of the size of a water melon we could eat. But after I had survived them and lived alone, one breadfruit was enough for one meal. In quantity, it was about 60 per cent of one portable rice cooker, and I was unable to eat more than that. Seven cycad powder balls were enough for one meal. Even so, there was no change in the fact that I was

surviving on the starvation line as before. I was always hungry, even after eating something. Simply, my body became able to accept less and less food than before.

I suffered from a stomach ulcer for the second time the year after the first ulcer. One heavy cloudy day, I looked out from the hole to see a group of young calves which did not yet have horns on their heads. It was still 2 o'clock in the afternoon and too risky to operate outside. Even so, it was too precious a chance to miss. As I could not make a huge noise, I tried to catch one of them by my bare hands. I made a charge at a big one with my full strength. A moment before my charge, a small one emerged from the side. I happened to catch a front leg of the small one.

I thus missed the target. But anyway, I managed to push the little calf over. It fell onto the ground. I engaged it in a close hand-to-hand combat. At that moment, I truly wished that Shichi and Nakahata had been alive to help me. I managed to bind the calf's legs with pandanus leaves. I then picked up a rope made from coconut shell fibres from my hole, got it round the calf's body and tied it to a nearby betel palm tree. I then lifted the weeds which the calf and I had disturbed and flattened in our deadly struggle. I washed away the dirt which we put on the weeds with bottles of water. At around sunset, I came out of my hole and tried to pull the calf to the stream at the rear of my hole. The calf firmly refused to move. I learnt that it was wrong to pull a cow. I decided to push. I tied the calf to the betel palm tree with a longer rope lest it run away, and then hit its bottom with a tree branch. Then, the calf voluntarily went down towards the stream.

In the stream, I said 'excuse me' to the calf and cut its throat with a machete.<sup>9</sup> The calf kept standing calmly and quietly while bleeding profusely. I took my clothing off to enter the stream naked, and beheaded the calf with a machete. I then chopped the body into four chunks. I was then able to confirm that the calf was a ruminant, having a series of eight or so balloon-like stomachs in a chain. The first three stomachs were filled with green grasses which the calf had swallowed. From the fourth stomach onwards, the contents became dissolved and mushy, apparently being digested. The last stomach had a net naturally devised to filter the food. It was fol-

lowed by an amazingly long intestine. I cut it into pieces and threw them away. I found them floating and drifting on the surface of the stream. I ran after them, picked them up, and hid them near the bank. I carried the limbs to my shelter one by one and each of the two halves of the body, and finally the head. Although it was a very young calf, the head was particularly heavy. I fell down once on my way back to my shelter.

I then returned to the bank of the stream where I had hidden the intestine, made a hole and buried it there. While I was doing so, a US tracked vehicle passed by on the mountain range about 100 yards east of me. If I had taken a bit longer to butcher the calf, I might have been discovered. I was on the river bank at that moment, and quickly lowered my body to hide myself behind the weeds. I waited and assessed the situation there, and after having seen the tracked vehicle going back, I returned to my shelter.

I had butchered a number of cows and pigs on a great number of occasions before. However, I had never done so on my own. This was the first occasion on which I performed such a huge job entirely on my own. I laid down banana leaves on the floor of the hole like a mat. Throughout the night, I roasted the beef partly for immediate consumption and partly for preservation. Still, the head, both front legs and a back leg remained to be roasted. I enjoyed the pleasure of considering how to cook them, whether I should boil the beef in coconut milk or what. But once I started cooking, there was actually no time but to concentrate on roasting and boiling.

Next morning, I went out to sort out the mess I had created the previous evening around my underground shelter. I had a sour belch. ‘Ah, perhaps, I have eaten too much? Or I may belch after drinking too much water, too . . .’

The next evening, I had an utterly black stool. The pit of my stomach began to ache again, and the thumping pain was more severe than on the first occasion. Even so, I had to dry the roasted beef under the sun as soon as possible; otherwise it would quickly rot in the tropical climate. Then I turned to the remaining raw beef. But it was already thoroughly rotten when I touched it.

I had no other medical strategy but to boil a bottle of water and place the bottle on my stomach to counteract the pain, again. I

thought that I should not eat the beef. But I had no practical alternative but to simmer the dried beef with green breadfruit for a very long time until both became soft enough to eat. I continued this diet for about three months and in the meantime, the ulcer was cured.

After having returned to Japan in 1972, a doctor in a Tokyo hospital said that he did not understand the causes of the first stomach ulcer, but he thought that the second was caused by the sudden secretion of very strong gastric acid which not only dissolved the beef, but also the inner surface of the stomach which became resistant only to weak gastric acid sufficient to dissolve vegetables. But he said that he needed further research to ascertain why it had been cured.

I had actually made some drugs of dried livers of eels and toads, because they were said to cure stomach diseases. However, cockroaches had eaten the drugs before I suffered from the ulcers. Therefore, I was unable to use them.

After I had more or less recovered from the second stomach ulcer, a group of natives raided the patch of bamboo thicket in which my underground shelter was situated. They shouted 'Hoi! Hoi!' as usual. In the bamboo thicket, I had direct eye contact with one of their dogs. I was unable to move and kept gazing at the dog's eyes. If I had run away, he would have barked and run after me. For reasons I did not know, I was calm on that occasion. Yes, I had been told that I should not run when I encountered a dog. But I had never experienced such a situation before, nor did I remember the warning. For whatever reasons, I kept quiet, and in the meantime, the dog turned its head and ran away.

I quickly camouflaged the entrance of my underground shelter with dead bamboo leaves and hid myself inside the shelter. In retrospect, I narrowly escaped a real danger. I think that probably because I had been eating coconuts and breadfruit as the natives did, my smell was not distinguishable for the dog from that of the natives, and he thought that I was one of his friends.

On almost every occasion after my return, people were particularly inquisitive about my sexual appetite. It was probably natural to be curious about the long solitary life of a man. But to be honest, I had to concentrate on how to escape the notice of the enemy and

survive, and I had consumed all of my energy and exhausted all of my abilities for that sole purpose. I felt no other desire stirred within me other than to survive. Sex was of lesser significance than survival, and was not necessary under the circumstances. I was struggling on the border between life and death, both mentally and physically. But I think that it was natural that those who led an ordinary human life tended to ask such questions.

This point can be told the other way round: we had been condemned to be denied to have a natural state of human life. The media tended to draw an analogy between Robinson Crusoe and me. The protagonist of Daniel Defoe's renowned novel<sup>10</sup> and I are certainly similar in some ways, for example, the solitary twenty-eight years of survival on an isolated island. Robinson Crusoe, too, did not display any interest in sex.

However, he was on an uninhabited island and in this respect, his circumstances were very definitely different from mine: I had to keep paying attention to the gun point of the invisible enemy who might discover my whereabouts and attack me at any moment.

Perhaps, this might be quite hard to believe, but it was about forty days after I had been hospitalized in Tokyo that, for the first time, I became interested in a nurse as a woman, and it was the seventieth day of my hospitalization that I was able to answer affirmatively to the deputy director of the Tokyo hospital who, every time he saw me, asked whether I had had an erection.

## CHAPTER 15

# FACTORS IN MY SURVIVAL



After having suffered from malnutrition and the severe stomach ulcers, I gradually came to realize that I had lost weight and strength. I had reached my middle fifties. As I was alone, I was unable to compare myself with other people so that I could see how old I actually appeared. Moreover, I was simply too busy meeting the demands of day-to-day life to think or worry about my age.

After my return to Japan, lots of people asked me,

‘How did you endure the complete solitude for as long as eight years?’

‘How did you manage to remember the Japanese language? Did you speak to yourself every day and think something in your mind?’

‘You must have missed Japan, mustn’t you?’ and similar questions.

However, I never spoke to myself. I never uttered a word to myself. I had to think of the consequences of such a word being overheard by the enemy. Because of the circumstances of my early childhood, I was quiet and not talkative. Furthermore, I rigorously prohibited myself from murmuring. People asked me what I was thinking and how much I missed my parents. However, because I had actually been condemned to be buried under the business of the day. I had no time to think.

Of course, there were occasions on which I was drawn into nostalgic thoughts about my parents and others. When I was left alone after the death of Shichi and Nakahata, I was nearly fifty. After bathing in the stream at night, I sometimes enjoyed the cool breeze

and air under the bamboo thicket. On such occasions, some fragments of thoughts came into my empty mind, for example: judging from my own age, my stepfather and mother would no longer be alive; and what would have happened to my home. But however long I might have thought about such things, I was unable to do anything. It was pointless to cause my heart pain by dwelling on such things. I suspect, therefore, I was trying to suppress such thoughts.

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One night during these days, when I was sleeping while keeping the smoke in the hearth to deter mosquitoes, all of a sudden, there was a massive Bang . . .; something exploded over my head. I looked to my defence assuming that I had been attacked.

However, nothing followed the explosion. I lit a lamp and examined what had happened. It then transpired that a hand grenade, which had become unusable and which I had defused and left on the floor, somehow managed to roll into the hearth and exploded. It could have killed me. Because I was sleeping on a bamboo hay stack, I mean, a stack of dead bamboo leaves, slightly above the floor, I narrowly escaped a direct hit. I thought then that a hand grenade exploded only in particular directions. Of course, I am not sure about this. Simply, I might have been fortunate enough to be lying in a narrow gap of the radiating tracts of the grenade's explosion.

Instead of a bamboo hay stack, I sometimes knitted a mat from pandanus leaves when I had a period of time in which to do so. A leaf of a pandanus tree was as much as 80 inches (2 metres) long. It had thorns or actually blades on its edges, which needed to be removed. When the leaf was well dried, it split vertically very easily. The leaf had a hard string in the middle. One leaf, therefore, produced only two strips 0.8 inch (2 cm) wide. I knitted these strips crosswise to make a mat 80 inches (2 m) by 20 inches (50 cm). In order to strengthen its edges, I made a slightly bigger mat, and folded all the edges 8 inches (20 cm) inside. Thus, the resulting mat had thicker edges and a thinner centre, making it more comfortable to sleep on.

I knitted another pandanus mat of the same size and placed it

over the other, and slept on them. As the lower mat rotted faster than the one above it, I replaced the lower one first. However, it took at least one month to make a pandanus mat. It was rather a complicated process to make it. Therefore, for the last two years, I had no time to make any pandanus mat, because I was too busy on other work. I simply laid some strips of bamboo shoots on the bottom of my hole and lay down on them.

Bamboo shoot strips quickly dried and crumbled and became bent and torn within a week. Also they tended to block the drainage. Therefore, I had to change them frequently and burnt the old ones in the hearth.

Cockroaches were the greatest nuisance in my underground life. At night, about 150 cockroaches emerged, flew inside the hole and mated. I had no pesticide. I had no alternative but to crush them by hand one by one. But there were simply too many in the hole to get rid of in this way. An idea of keeping toads inside the hole came to my mind some time later. Toads seemed to like eating cockroaches. When I caught a cockroach and showed it to a toad, it eventually approached my hand and ate the cockroach. I was unable to chat with toads, but toads were my only allies and friends.

After the devastating typhoon, small mice which had a strange elongated upper lip, appeared. They did not squeak, but rather chirped, 'cheep, cheep, cheep . . .' They also kindly ate cockroaches. They gradually propagated year by year, probably being carried to Guam in US transport ships. But this particular species of mouse smelt like machine oil. They were too smelly to eat by whatever method of cooking.

In inverse proportion to the propagation of these strange mice, the edible field mice rapidly disappeared. I do not know whether I had eaten them all or they had moved somewhere else because the natives continued to burn the grassland.

After I became alone, I rarely went beyond the vicinity and, for a number of reasons, I refrained from camping outside. First of all, it was lonely to camp outside – I no longer had Shichi and Nakahata with me. Second, I had to make a fire in an open field for cooking and smoking in order to deter mosquitoes. Inevitably, the smell of smoke and cooking as well as footprints tended to be left behind. If

the fire was seen by the enemy or spread across reeds, I would be discovered. I persuaded myself to take precautions against all odds, indeed, against the remotest risk.

Because I did not exercise my body so much for the last eight years of solitude, I was consuming only about 1,000 calories per day while an average adult male requires 2,400 calories per day. From my long experience in this state of living, I did not eat mushrooms, creeping root crop stems, bean pods, fish scales, shrimp shells, etc. which I was unable to digest. Shell-snails were tasty after I had removed their sliminess with alkaline solution and having washed them thoroughly in water, and simmered them down thereafter. But they were so hard that I had to chew them thoroughly.

Chewing helped digestion. My parents told me to chew very well. This sort of old wisdom turned out to be particularly helpful and practically important for my survival. I thankfully chewed over my parents' teaching.

When there was nothing to eat except green bananas, which were not edible as they were, I thought about baking them in order to remove their harshness. In this, I learnt from the country practice of baking astringent persimmons to remove their astringency. I also drank water straight from a river where fish and insects were seen. This was practically safe as I knew from my experience while growing up in the countryside.

The same could be said about salt. I was constantly in need of salt. There was no salt available in and around my shelter which was miles away from the coast. I was unable to go near the coast because there was a huge US military road running along it. However, I saw cows and pigs in my area, living without salt. I rather optimistically believed that a human being should be able to survive without salt in the same way that other animals did.

Of course, the head of a shrimp, for example, had a salty taste on occasion. Anyway, I believed that I would be able to survive if I lived like a wild animal. As long as I was thinking in this way, I never thought that I was not free, even though I was never free from want in this primitive lifestyle. It is said that one finds freedom when one is not free. Now, back in Japan, I seriously think that the freedom of mind, which I had enjoyed on Guam, was a true treasure.

In the end, the things which I wanted most on Guam were a slightly easier way to make fire and to preserve it, as well as the knowledge of herbs.

As I had gone wild, my nose and ears became keener. Even so, I was unable to distinguish by smell herbs and edible plants from a variety of wild plants on Guam. I think there were lots of useful herbs and edible plants among them. Simply, I had no knowledge of them.

Cows and pigs ate cycad nuts, which contained potassium cyanide. After careful observation, it became clear that they never ate the inner part of the nut containing the poison. Cycad nuts became ripe eight months after they bloomed. The ripe nuts emitted such a fantastically tasty smell that it was hard to believe that they contained the lethal poison. We happened to know of it because our former civilian colleague, Nihei, was familiar with the natives' way of living. We therefore removed the potassium cyanide before eating them. I am afraid that not a small number of Japanese would have been killed by the potassium cyanide by eating cycad nuts.

I had once lost everything in the fire. But by this time, I had acquired a variety of utensils in my possession, some of which I had manufactured. Also, I had to store foodstuffs, and firewood and a bit of charcoal in my small underground shelter. There was no room for my fish traps, therefore. I hid the traps in a hollow in the river near my shelter.

Early on, I used to make a fish trap with reeds found in the river. As I happened to pick up US telephone wire later, I made a trap with it. But it was rather too heavy. Then, I made a trap with stems of pandanus-like vine, which was a kind of pandanus whose stems crept along the ground like Japan's wisteria vines. However, it was too risky to cut too many pandanus-like vines because it would leave conspicuous evidence of my presence. Therefore, I began to knit a trap with bamboos when I became settled in an underground shelter.

The southern bamboo easily became hard and difficult to handle once dried. Therefore, in order to make a bamboo trap, I cut a bamboo in the early morning without making any noise. I cut it into a number of sizable cylinders and split a cylinder into a number of thin slivers about 0.3 inch (7 to 8 mm) wide. I then sorted out

bamboo skins, bamboo slivers, and the node's caps (which separated a number of hollows inside a bamboo), separately in a wider space outside the shelter. I knitted a bamboo trap inside the shelter. I used bamboo buds to make the core and the valves of a trap. I kept spraying water on the bamboo slivers to prevent them from becoming dry, hard and unmanageable.

I went out in search of food in the very early morning before the natives began to operate near my shelter and in the late evening after the natives had gone home. I did not go out at night because I might not be able to erase all the footprints in the darkness. I either walked in the stream near my shelter or on a footpath which the natives had unintentionally created. As a maximum, I carried five fish traps in a sack on my back and two fish traps in my hands. By that time, I knew roughly where eels and shrimps were. I went out to set the traps as soon as the sun set, and came back in the moonlight or starlight, and went out again to collect the traps before the sun rose. I always set one or two traps in the stream right at the rear of my shelter.

On each occasion, my traps normally caught one portable-rice-cooker-full of shrimps and one or two eels. I removed the shell and stomach of the shrimps in the river, and boiled the rest to eat unless I was intending to make stock from it. As the shrimps were fatty, I was only able to eat half a portable-rice-cooker-full of shrimps per meal. Occasionally, I caught a large eel more than 3 inches (as large as 8 cm) thick. Usually, I caught an eel 1.6 inch (4 cm) thick, 12 to 16 inches (30 to 40 cm) long.

When it rained and the water level of the river rose, my traps caught nothing. Instead, when the water level lowered some time after the rain stopped, lots of eels entered the traps. Perhaps, eels know when it is going to rain and were able to escape before it rained. We, human beings, were unable to forecast the weather as accurately as the eels, so that I made considerable efforts in vain and had a number of failures.

It was towards the end of a breadfruit season. As I was getting myself ready to go out to gather breadfruit for the last time in the year, there was a thunderstorm at around 10.30 in the morning and it poured. Because the breadfruit was fully ripened at that time, the

rain would cause all the fruit to fall from the trees and quickly become rotten. Therefore, I was unable to wait until the sunset to go out to gather some breadfruit. I cautiously went out of my shelter and crossed the river. The river level was raised but not yet prohibitively too rapid to cross. I gathered twenty or so fully ripened mouth-watering breadfruit. On my way back, I found the river impassable due to the raised water level and the rapid flow. I thought about climbing the foxtail grass mountain by holding onto pandanus-like vines like a monkey to get back. However, the mountain was too steep to climb with so many breadfruit. Even if I had divided the load into two, it seemed almost impossible to climb it.

Because breadfruit floated on water, I set out to cross the swollen river by gripping reeds. However, when I grabbed pieces of reeds, they bent and cut my middle and third fingers very deeply. The fingers bled profusely. I was so surprised that one of my sandals was carried away. After these traumatic events, I narrowly managed to cross the river. It was a disaster.

Because I did not want the enemy to find my sandal, I went along the river up to five hundred yards or so in search of it. However carefully I searched for it, I was unable to find it. I eventually gave up and went back to my shelter. Fortunately, to my great relief, I happened to come across the sandal when I later went to catch shrimps in the river.

Human beings are inferior to animals also on account of their eyesight in the dark.

We, for the first time, thought about making a lamp when we dug the first underground shelter, because its interior was completely dark. Initially, we put water and oil in a cup and placed wire in it as a wick. Subsequently, we made a wick from a pandanus leaf and let it float on the surface of oil. And then, we placed an empty can at an angle to use it as an oil saucer. Finally, when we were in the sixth and largest underground shelter under the banyan tree, Shichi hammered a piece of brass from a US bombshell into an oil saucer.

We used lard from a cow or a pig to burn in such a lamp but the animal lard solidified. When we mixed the animal lard and vegetable oil, only the vegetable oil came up to the top of the wick. Thereafter, we only used palm oil.

Palm oil was edible, and indispensable for frying. It was taken from coconut milk. In the absence of salt, soy sauce and sugar, coconut milk was a great sweetener and a nutritious seasoning adding flavour to all sorts of food: shrimps, eels, toads, root crops, breadfruit, cycad nuts, papaya, shell-snails, etc.

We used this palm oil lamp mainly to illuminate the large sixth underground shelter when the three of us ate meals together. When we were digging an underground shelter, the heat from a lamp, however small it might be, was too hot to bear. Therefore, we mainly relied on a cord wick fire for light. In the seventh underground shelter just for myself, the shelter was so small that a palm oil lamp generated too much heat to bear. I did not use the lamp except where I had to look for something.

As I dug my seventh underground shelter under a piece of bamboo thicket, I often ate bamboo shoots. In the aftermath of the devastating typhoon, there was nothing to eat except bamboo shoots. On Guam, bamboo shoots grew four times a year. The shoots were edible only within one month of their growth at the maximum, because they grew and hardened very quickly. Interestingly, there were totally plain shoots without bitterness and utterly bitter ones in the same bamboo thicket depending on the locality. Also, there were hard bamboos and soft ones in the same thicket depending on the locality. Curiously, the bamboos in my thicket became thinner and thinner after the typhoon.

When we dug the sixth underground shelter under the banyan tree, every bamboo was too thick to make even a ladder by which to climb up and down the entrance shaft. Instead, it was perfectly suited for making cups and water bottles by removing its nodes' caps. I still remember vividly the sight of Nakahata carrying four or five thick bamboo bottles in a sack on his back. Shichi was seven years younger than I was. Nakahata was eleven years younger. Therefore, they deserved more than I did to survive and return to Japan. Their respective mothers are still alive in their home land. How much would their mothers have been delighted if they had come back alive?

I was brought up by a divorced mother. Even after the official report of my death reached her, 'Shō-ichi is still alive', she kept

refusing to believe my reported death until her own death in 1958. Her persistent belief might have travelled across fields, mountains and the ocean to reach me and kept encouraging me, 'Don't give up!'

My mother actually built a fine tomb for me in 1955, three years before her death, in Gyōun Temple in Sennonji village. Even after that, she maintained that I was alive and disliked any talk about my tomb.

Yes, I was surviving. I had been made into a wild beast since the deployment on Guam. Fortunately, my last eight years on Guam in complete solitude had brought me back to humanity little by little. I was concentrating on surviving 'today' and even that was difficult to achieve. Still, I was gradually coming back to humanity.

Perhaps because of that, I once kept small birds in my underground shelter. There were meadow buntings and a variety of small birds whose names I did not know. When I approached a nest in grassland with a lizard hanging from a wooden stick, baby birds came forward. When their parents were around, I just observed them from a distance. A parent was feeding its chicks evenly and equally. It was lovely to see them. When a nest was made on a tree branch, as I shook the tree, some baby birds, still blind, fell from the nest. When I gave them some insects to eat, they took to this human being. As I examined them closely, baby birds hatched out of eggs as early as within a week, perhaps because the weather was so warm on Guam, and just after one night, they flew with their parents even before they had fully developed their feathers.

I captured two baby birds. I crushed insects and nuts into small pieces with chopsticks, and fed the babies from mouth to mouth. They did not try to get out of my underground shelter even after they were fully feathered. I did not know whether or not they were unable to fly vertically to get out. They were running around inside the underground shelter joyfully. When they grew bigger, they drank coconut milk from my mouth, and jumped on my shoulders playfully. However, while I was sleeping, rats attacked and killed them. I felt so much pity that I regretted that I had domesticated them. Thereafter, I had no wish to domesticate any more baby birds.

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A variety of factors contributed to my survival on Guam. First, there was no malaria,<sup>1</sup> poisonous insects or snakes. As I mentioned before, the Spaniards were troubled by poisonous snakes so much that they imported a lot of poisonous toads to exterminate them. We ate poisonous toads, but only after having thoroughly washed away their poison with great care. It was therefore said that there were no snakes on Guam. However, when I was weaving cloth in the underground shelter, a snake came down through the entrance hole. I was alarmed and hit it with a bamboo spatula which I was holding in my hand. It went away. So there were some snakes on Guam, after all.

Second, the climate was favourable. The temperature was constant at about 80 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (27 to 28 degrees Celsius) throughout the year. It was actually not as humid as a Japanese summer. It was cool in the shade of a tree. There was a squall of rain once or twice a day. Once I became used to it, the Guam climate was rather comfortable.

Third, my underground shelter was only about a mile from Talofofo village. The locals never expected nor imagined that a Japanese soldier was hiding himself so near to them, and therefore, they did not patrol the area so frequently.

Fourth, for my part, I never approached any local community and took meticulous care not to leave my footprints, not to make any fire or smoke during the day time and not to make any noise.

All of these factors combined to assist my survival. I would not have been able to survive if any one of them had been missing.

## CHAPTER 16

# ‘DISCOVERY’ NO ONE SHALL REMAIN ALIVE TO INCUR THE SHAME OF BECOMING A PRISONER OF WAR, 24 JANUARY 1972



It occurred one evening in July 1972 – so I calculated the fateful date in my calendar but I was told after I was ‘discovered’ that it was the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 1972.

I observed the waxing and waning of the moon to count the months and remembered how many twelve-month cycles I had gone through in my mind. However, I did not count any necessary intercalary month<sup>1</sup> so that my calendar was six months ahead when I was discovered in 1972, the twenty-eighth year of my life on Guam.

On that day, I was convinced that it was early summer. I left the shelter later than usual and went down into the stream in order to set some shrimp traps. I was thinking that the sun set late in the summer so that I would be able to reach the destination before dark, even if I went out later than usual.

At that time, I usually walked in the stream to go to set some shrimp and eel traps. When it rained, the stream rose above the foxtail grasses on its banks. However, the water level fell within two hours after it stopped raining. I walked in the stream because no footprint remained and foxtail grasses 80 inches (2 metres) tall on both its banks effectively hid me behind them. Also, the stream was the shortest way to get to the destination, the lower reaches of the same river.

The day before that fateful day, the voices of the natives wafted to me from a variety of directions. Therefore, I remained alert during the daytime on the following day, too. However, the natives usually carried out their raids only in the afternoon and they usually went back before sunset. Therefore, it never occurred to me that they were still around so near me at that time of the day.

Also, when they conducted a raid, they fired a gunshot in their village, presumably in order to signal the start. They then entered the jungle, beating pieces of wood and shouting, 'Hoi! Hoi!'. From the point of view of those who were being raided, they were kindly giving us an advance warning. As long as I kept watching their conduct carefully, I was reasonably confident that I could escape from them.

I carried five bamboo traps in a net sack on my back and a further two traps in my hands. I walked in the stream about 0.6 mile (1 km). Then the stream turned so that I climbed out of the river onto the bank to make a short cut across the foxtail grasses to my destination. I pushed my way across the foxtail grasses which were taller than I was. Admittedly, I was paying attention only to my feet.

When I emerged from the grasses, 'Oh! My goodness!'

I found a native standing in front of me.<sup>2</sup> He was aiming his rifle at me. My eyes darted from side to side. There were six or seven native men on the right.<sup>3</sup> I frantically sprinted at the one in front of me in order to grab his rifle. Regrettably, I was forced down to the ground, perhaps due to the sheer difference in terms of physical strength.

*'Nihonbei-ka* (Are you a Japanese soldier?)'

He asked me in faltering Japanese.

*'Tsuitekoi* (Come with us!)

They raised me up from both sides. I gave up my will to resist and followed them sadly and dispiritedly.

It was actually not summer but January and the sky became dark as soon as the sun set. I was flanked by the natives on both sides and was forced, even if not dragged, to walk.

'To where are they bringing me? What will happen to me?'

It might have been a natural response to be confused under such circumstances. I kept asking the same question to myself worriedly.

I remember that the group of natives consisted of three adults and two children.<sup>4</sup> They asked me very gently,

*'Ito, Minagawa shitteru-ka?' [Do you know Itō and Minagawa?]*<sup>5</sup>

They also said,

*'Minagawa-ha Nibon-be kaette kanemochi-ni natteiru. [Minagawa has become rich back in Japan.]'*

They were not fluent in Japanese, but judging from the tone of their voice and their demeanour, they were trying to reassure me as much as possible that they were no danger to me. However, I was so upset and perplexed that I was unable to thank them for their kindness. I felt as though I was on a dark and long march to death.

One of them produced a piece of bread<sup>6</sup> in front of me suggesting, by way of gesture, that I eat it. I was too frightened and too thirsty at that time to eat any dry food. As it seemed to be a gesture of kindness and good will, I felt obliged to eat it. I took a bite from it. But it was too dry for my parched throat. I put it into my pocket. It was difficult to eat such a dry thing when one was facing a life and death situation.

As I began to calm down, I realized that I had lost my straw sandals and was walking on bare feet.

After a while,

*'Chotto mate! [Wait for a moment!]*'

One of the natives hastened back towards the way we had come. While I was wondering what had happened, the other natives did not show any hostility towards me. They seemed to have been trying to reassure me about my safety, although I did not understand their language.

The man who had run back kindly picked up the shrimp traps which I had dropped on the way. Now, I can cordially thank him for his act of kindness. However, at that time, because two of them wore US military uniforms, I did not trust any one of them. Also the three adults carried guns.<sup>7</sup>

In the village, I was put into a house under a galvanized sheet iron roof, which was apparently their house. Fourteen to fifteen men and women surrounded me and gawped at me curiously. I was given a cup of juice or coffee. I do not actually remember which, because I was so thirsty that I did not care what it was.<sup>8</sup> They then served me

rice and a piece of meat<sup>9</sup> and suggested that I ate them. I ate rice for the first time after more than some twenty years. But I do not remember how it tasted. As I did not eat the meat, they served me a piece of stewed fish.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, there was a squall of rain and water began to leak through the roof. Since I was captured, I had been afraid of being killed. The sound of the rain beating on the galvanized iron sheet was intrusive and daunting and thoroughly frightened me.

Mr Duenas, who discovered me, had had his younger brother and nephew killed by Japanese combat remnants after the formal end of the war. Therefore, it cannot be said that no one in his large family resented Japanese like me. I am full of appreciation for their kindness every time the memory of meeting them comes back to mind.

After the squall, they said something to me, which I did not understand. By way of gesture, I was nudged to get on a lorry<sup>11</sup> belonging to Mr De Gracia, who jointly discovered me with Mr Duenas. Mr Duenas also got on the lorry. They drove along a rough mountainous road. It felt like a long journey. Eventually, we arrived at the house of the Talofofu village commissioner.<sup>12</sup> On our way, the lorry stopped at times and someone who looked Japanese came forward and asked me something in Japanese. But I do not remember anything clearly now.

Then a group of policemen<sup>13</sup> came along with lots of villagers. I was questioned in a crowded room. Some Japanese words were spoken, but I hardly understood any sentence or indeed, any question which was put to me. I felt that I was like a monkey in a circus.

I was then brought to the police headquarters in Agana in a police vehicle. A second-generation Japanese woman was brought in to see me. She was wearing a pure white dress and spoke to me in Japanese. I heard the fine real Japanese language for the first time in eight years. She seemed to me to be an angel. However, at that time, I was afraid of being killed and I do not think that I was able to answer any question properly.

Thereupon, a Red Cross nurse came over<sup>14</sup> and I was treated for four abrasions, which had presumably been caused by the struggle at the time of my discovery. I was then transferred to Guam Memorial Hospital. I think it was already eleven o'clock at night.

When I arrived at the hospital, twenty or so Japanese people greeted me at the door, shouting, '*Banzai!* (Hurrah!)'.

I was immediately examined physically. Consul Shintaku of the Japanese Consulate on Guam, Kazu Matsumoto of Pan-American World Airways and another Japanese person<sup>15</sup> kindly accompanied me.<sup>16</sup> Presumably, it was about one o'clock in the morning. Still, some Japanese on the island brought me some sushi and a variety of Japanese snacks. The hospital apparently confiscated them, as it was medically inappropriate to give me so much food so soon. After having been physically examined, I was put into a paediatric room, which happened to be free that night. I was not sure whether I was going to be killed or treated medically. I was not in the right state of mind to be able to thank anyone for their kindness.

'See you tomorrow.' I repeated the words which Consul Shintaku, Mr Matsumoto and another person uttered when they left me in the room. I wondered whether or not I was going to survive the night and what was waiting for me tomorrow. I was thus unable to sleep at all.

Next morning (25 January), Mr Edward Tsutsui, Deputy Director of the Guam Visitors Bureau, knocked on the door and said,

'NHK has currently been holding a line with a Mr Hanai of Hamamatsu. NHK is going to connect the line to you. Please take the handset. Do you know Mr Hanai?'

Mr Matsui gave me the handset.

I said I knew the master of Tailor Hanai in Toyohashi, and received the call without knowing what 'NHK'<sup>17</sup> was and to where the line was connected. I just said over the telephone, 'Yokoi here. I am fine.'

In fact, I do not remember anything of that time. Only after my return to Japan, I learnt that the master of Tailor Hanai had moved from Toyohashi to Hamamatsu. It was Master Hanai, after all, who watched the news of my discovery on television that morning and immediately telephoned NHK. However, I was, at that time, terrified by the approaching sense of death.

That day, I was laid down on an awesome bed to be x-rayed. I was scared, thinking it to be a beheading apparatus. It seemed to be so partly because the hospital's machine was particularly old and

monstrously heavy. Above all, they x-rayed me a number of times, saying that they failed to take an image and failed to develop it, and kept me lying down there for an hour or so. I thought that I was being experimented upon and it was a most frightening moment.<sup>18</sup>

Thereafter, at 10.30 in the morning, I was taken to the official residence of the Governor of Guam, Carlos G. Camacho, in Agana, being accompanied by Consul Shintaku and Mr Tsutsui. There, I attended a press interview for the first time in my life.

Some time after one o'clock in the afternoon, I was taken to search for my underground shelter. A convoy of police jeeps carrying us set out from Talofof village. When we stepped down from the jeeps, Lieutenant Mariano C. Cruz and Detective H. G. E. Scharff pulled out a shovel and a pickaxe from their jeep and carried them on their shoulders. At that moment, I was seized by a fear that I was going to be forced to dig a hole in the jungle and shot and buried.<sup>19</sup>

'Help!'

I screamed and clung to Mr Tsutsui. Or, so I was told later. I do not remember anything at all.

The commissioner of Talofof village, Mr Jesus M. Duenas, Mr Manuel T. De Gracia and I led the search party consisting of villagers and journalists about fifty to sixty strong. We shouted, 'Oy!', 'Oy!' to each other lest anyone go astray in the jungle. We put out some leaf marking at every turning point as we proceeded. We walked for two or three hours. Because I did not operate across so wide an area when I was in hiding, I was unable to find a way into my patch of bamboo thicket.

'I have no idea where my house is . . .'

After wandering in the jungle for a while, I first found the patch of jungle where Shichi and Nakahata used to live. The banyan tree under which we had dug the shelter had been damaged by the super-typhoon, eaten by insects and rotted to nothing. The entrance shaft was filled with pandanus roots. It was very difficult to get in the hole. It was already after three o'clock and the sunset was approaching. We decided to inspect the shelter next day. I then led the party to my own shelter.

Because I had left my cord wick burning when I left the shelter, I

was afraid of a fire inside. However, with relief, I found everything had remained intact.

Then the policemen entered the premises, carried out of the hole all of my possessions, household utensils and clothing, which I had acquired in the course of twenty-eight years. They confiscated them as evidence.

I just stood outside the hole and watched them. I did not understand what was happening. A nurse who seemed to be a second-generation Japanese,<sup>20</sup> gently kept standing by me throughout the entry and search of my premises by the police.

The sun set. The search party walked back along a dark rough path. Mr Duenas led the party by torchlight in the moonlight. Fanning away swarms of mosquitoes with betel palm leaves, everyone was lively as if they had been on a school excursion or something. As for me, because I was not killed, I was rather confused. I simply followed the party.

‘Mr Yokoi, are you all right?’

Everyone kindly took care of me. They were very considerate and stopped a number of times to allow me to take a rest on the grass. In fact, because I was wearing a pair of ill-fitting shoes, I was suffering from painful blisters.

That night, indeed at around midnight, I was asked to attend interviews. Sortie after sortie of press squadrons were flown from Japan to Guam for the sole purpose of interviewing me. I found myself suddenly ambushed by battalions of journalists for the first time. A series of questions was fired at me like bursts of machine-gun bullets. I was only able to give some confused answers. After a cease-fire was imposed, I encountered their new round of offensives in the form of requests for my autograph on a piece of paper which each of these people produced. I think I was forced to autograph twenty or thirty sheets of paper before another cease-fire was imposed.

At around three o'clock in the morning, Consul Shintaku and Mr Tsutsui left, saying, ‘See you tomorrow.’ As I was on my own again in a hospital room, I felt terribly lonely. I was tired but was unable to sleep.

Next morning, my legs suffered from dropsy due to the fatigue

of the day before. Regrettably, the oedema prevented me from participating in the search for Shichi's and Nakahata's premises. I was then informed of the death of my stepfather and my mother on that day.

Of course, as I was twenty-five years younger than my mother and thirty years younger than my stepfather, I had not expected them to be still alive since I had been hiding in the underground shelter. Even so, when I was formally informed of their death, although I pretended it was expected, I sank into a deep sorrow which I was unable to describe in words. I tried to hold back my tears, but tears irresistibly flowed down my cheeks.

I then vividly remembered when I last saw my mother: she gave me quietly and gently a small pack of hand-made fried bean curd sushi, having waited on a roadside for my squad's return from the drill ground, trying to resist expressing any sense of sorrow. I was sorry for my mother. I deplored the way I had been as I had only worried her and was totally unable to look after her in her old age.

Actually, on the evening of the second day after the discovery (26 January), my two comrades on Guam, Bunzō Minagawa and Tadashi Itō came all the way from Japan to see me.<sup>21</sup> I was relieved to see familiar faces for the first time since the discovery.

However, I remained fundamentally suspicious and frightened throughout my time on Guam. Whenever I heard doctors speaking something in English, I feared and worried that anything could happen to me at any moment.

In the Guam hospital, I happened to mention our platoon leader Inaba from whom I parted at the mouth of the River Talofoto in September 1944. 'Even if you had sailed in the iron pontoon boats of the engineers', the locals said, 'you would have been brought back to the same place by the following morning, because the current there was eddying. It would be absolutely impossible to get off from there.'

We might well have attempted to sail off from there if there had been no US base there. Then, we might have been discovered by the Americans after daybreak, and shot dead, as we had drifted back to the river mouth. I have never heard of Lieutenant Inaba since. If he had attempted to get off after the dissolution of our platoon, he

would not have succeeded. He might have been killed in the jungle during a mopping-up operation. He might have starved to death. In any case, he had not come back alive.

Our plan at that time was to make a raft by combining two iron pontoons. We simply thought that once we were out on the sea, Japanese submarines or aircraft or patrol boats would discover and rescue us. It was a gamble. We never imagined that Japan had been fighting such a hopeless war at that time. I was informed twenty-eight years later that our plan was unworkable due to the eddying current near the river mouth!

People would find our plan childish and ludicrous. When the locals explained to me this geographical reality in the area, I was caught by burning anger at the irresponsibility and the sheer lack of respect for human life on the part of the Japanese military leadership who had placed us in a situation in which we were only able to make such a plan; indeed, we were denied any ground on which to make any realistic plan.

We, the Japanese garrisons on Guam of about 20,000 strong, had been forcefully separated from our families, and positioned on an unknown island without any strategy or any defence installations. To put it simply, we were told to die. We were said to have been made a 'breakwater' in the Pacific. The waves of US attacks in the Pacific were simply too huge to be broken. How wretched were those who had died in such a way!

This thought led me to think that I had survived dozens of life-threatening crises over the course of twenty-eight years, because the spirits of my fellow compatriots protected me, shielded me and kept me alive.

Honestly, I was already sensing the limit of my physical and mental strength to survive alone any longer. On that day, the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 1972, I think that the spirits of my fellow compatriots said, 'It is high time to come out!', and propelled me back into the outside world.

This is because Okinawa was scheduled to be returned to Japan in May 1972, allegedly marking the true end of the war in the Pacific. The spirits of my fellow compatriots had kept me alive in hiding until this time, and produced me in front of the Japanese who had mostly forgotten about the war.

Has the war ended? Has the state held itself fully accountable for the war?

'No', the spirits of my fellow compatriots are telling me, 'Come out and tell the government the truth of what happened.'

Until the fifth day after my discovery, I had heard the voices of dead persons. I had never experienced such while I was hiding myself in the underground shelter. The spirits of Japanese soldiers stood by my bedside and shouted aloud at me while I was asleep. When I tried to ascertain what they said,

'Yokoi, why are you coming home alone?'

I was able to hear clearly what they were saying.

'Please take us with you.'

When I woke up, the soldiers disappeared. When I fell into a doze, their voices came back. All were the familiar voices of my subordinates.

Even when I was wide awake, curtain hooks appeared to be Buddhist sūtra scripts, and the printed letters on newspapers appeared to be the exact words which the voices were saying during my dream. However, as soon as someone approached me, the letters receded back into their original places.

At first, I was so tormented by the voices, I earnestly asked the nurses not to leave me alone. Finally, I asked for two pieces of paper. I wrote with a Japanese calligraphy brush, 'The Spirits of His Holiest Imperial Majesty's Soldiers' and 'The Spirits of Shichi and Nakahata', respectively on each of them. I displayed them near my pillow. Thereafter, I stopped hearing their voices.

I was able to go back to my homeland which I had dreamt of seeing again, with the bones of Shichi and Nakahata. I was so excited on my way back to Japan that I do not remember anything at all. I remember only that the captain and crew on board were very kind and that I felt truly relieved when I arrived at the Tokyo National First Hospital and sat in a wheelchair.

It was only on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 1972, when I was transferred from a special room on the fifteenth floor of the Tokyo National First Hospital to a common individual room on the sixteenth floor and the number of guards at the door was reduced to one that, for the first time, I was freed entirely from the fear of court martial proceedings and execution.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER 17

### EPILOGUE

# ‘BEING THANKFUL FOR THIS DAY IN ORDER THE BETTER TO ARRIVE AT TOMORROW’



Two years have passed quickly almost like the shadow of a dream since the 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1972, the day which I shall always remember as an important day in my life.

I shall never forget the variety of warm encouragements, both material and spiritual, which I have received from a great number of Japanese people. Thank you very much. I warmly appreciate your help and hope that I can strive to make efforts to give back to the public as much as this old man is able to do so.

As a part of such efforts, I have written this small record of my little life.

As I looked back quietly on my life on Guam, the sight of the River Talofoyo in the jungle came back to my mind.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the water of the river kept me alive. I drank from the River Talofoyo. I ate eels and shrimps of the River Talofoyo. I bathed in the River Talofoyo to relieve myself from the intolerable heat inside the underground shelter. I missed the river, which was the mother of my life.

Indeed, ‘Talofoyo’ was said to mean, coincidentally, ‘a pathway to tomorrow’ in the language of the Chamorro people, native to Guam.<sup>1</sup> I think that the astounding ten thousand days (10,048 days

*Epilogue*

from the day after the US invasion of Guam on 21 July 1944 to 24 January 1972) of my survival were the accumulation of my survival of 'this' day. Even if one is dying tomorrow, it is beautiful and valuable when he/she strives to live 'today' as far as he/she is able to.

It, therefore, seems most appropriate for me to give this book the title, 'A Pathway To Tomorrow'<sup>2</sup> because I had been in search of such a pathway for ten thousand days, loving my life every single day and striving to survive this particular day every day up to that number of days.

Finally, I pay my sincere homage to, and deeply felt thanks for, the spirits of millions of people who died in this war, and I ardently share in the common aspiration of all mankind, i.e. for 'a pathway to perpetual world peace' to be opened for everyone on earth as soon as possible.

24 January 1974

At home

Shō-ichi Yokoi

# AFTERWARDS



## 1. MARRIAGE

*'I Like A Person Who Is Kind Enough To Scold Me'*

Shō-ichi Yokoi<sup>1</sup> married Mihoko on 3 November 1972, a mere nine months after his discovery on Guam.

### **Mihoko and Her Family**

Mihoko was born in 1928 into a national rail official's family. She was the fourth child with three brothers and three sisters. She was thirteen years younger than Shō-ichi. Mihoko was educated at a prestigious higher girls' school (thirteen-eighteen years) into which, it was said, only one girl per village/district was able to enter. She entered the Niigata Higher Girls' School. Her teacher suggested that she pursue an even higher education at one of Japan's only two national institutions of higher education for women at that time (women's high normal schools). She had a more fortunate family and educational background than Shō-ichi.

In April 1943, Mihoko moved from Niigata to Yonago Higher Girls' School in order to look after her father, because he, due to his chronically deteriorating health, returned to his birthplace, Yonago in Tottori Prefecture on the western Sea of Japan coast. Mihoko's first older sister had already married. Her second older sister, Etsuko, was also married off to someone in Manchuria. Her older brother, Moriyah, was pursuing his studies in Niigata High School

and then in the Imperial University of Kyoto. Her other siblings were still very young. Mihoko was the only person suitable to help her mother look after the father and the younger members of the family. She gave up pursuing any higher education.

Guam, on which Shō-ichi Yokoi was positioned, became the site of the headquarters of the 20th Air Force of the US Army in charge of the strategic bombing of Japan's mainland. Under its command, from November 1944 onwards, sortie after sortie of B-29 Super-fortresses were flown from their bases on Saipan to hit Japan's industrial centres, and as these targets had quickly run out, from March 1945 onwards, to hit Japan's population centres, demanding that Japan surrender unconditionally. The 509th Composite Group in charge of the atomic bombing was positioned on Tinian, also under the operational command of the US Army 20th Air Force on Guam.

From the US strategic point of view, Yonago had virtually nothing to be bombed, in terms of military and industrial targets as well as the size of its population. Therefore, Mihoko's family, except Etsuko and Moriyah in Manchuria, happened to be located in a relatively 'safe' place during the final months of the deadly aerial campaigns culminating in the atomic bombings.

Mihoko's older brother, Moriyah, was to become not a negligible factor in Shō-ichi's later life back in Japan. Moriyah was enlisted into military service while he was still pursuing his studies of philosophy in Kyoto. There had been a moratorium on conscription for university students until October 1943, when the Prime Minister General Tōjō lifted it on the advice of Nobusuke Kishi, a shrewd technocrat devoted to building a war-making economy first in Manchuria and then in Japan as a minister of General Tōjō's cabinet (who became the Prime Minister 1957–60). The conscription age was lowered to nineteen years old in December 1943. In September 1944, when Shō-ichi was officially presumed to have died on Guam after the US invasion, Moriyah was enlisted and chose to serve in the navy due to its reputation for being comparatively more liberal than the army. But to serve in the navy at that time turned out to involve the expectation of carrying out suicide attacks by crashing one's own aircraft or submarine equipped with a bomb into an

enemy warship. Moriyah was sent to Ryojun (Port Arthur) in Manchuria for training.

Mihoko's second older sister, Etsuko, who was also in Manchuria, died of pneumonia under the complex circumstances in the course of the Soviet Union's last-minute invasion of Manchuria from 8 August 1945, which did not stop even after Japan's surrender on 15 August. Whatever was her fate, Mihoko was busy looking after her father and younger siblings.

Fortunately, her older brother, Moriyah, refused to meet the expectation of volunteering to serve in the operation *kaiten* ('the turning of the heaven' or 'the revolution of destiny'), which was the submarine version of the operation *kamikaze* ('divine wind'). The sight of his assigned submarine led him to ask his superior, 'Is this boat seaworthy?'

The reality of the issue seems to have been too crude for the superiors to answer properly. The boat or a 'man-guided cruising torpedo' as it actually was, was a powerful indicator of Japan's hopeless and miserable war-making capabilities at that time. Even for the 'kamikaze' operations, in later years, aircraft were manufactured by the hands of schoolgirls aged thirteen to eighteen. Rivets tightened by these rather undernourished young girls were often unable to hold the aircraft together while in flight. The same happened with regard to the 'submarines'. Such aircraft and submarines, on most occasions, disintegrated long before any enemy target came into sight.

Moriyah refused to die so pointlessly. He was subsequently beaten for not complying with what was expected of him. But somehow he was not killed. He recalls the words of his superiors which he overheard while lying down after the beating: 'He is useless for the war. But he may be needed after the war. Someone has to look after Japan when this war ends.'

Whatever his immediate superiors might have thought, as a punishment, he was deprived of his 'officer' status, assigned to dig trenches as a mere private along the Pacific coast to the east of Tokyo where the US invasion was expected. In the event of the US invasion of Japan, he was destined to be among the first to die. Fortunately, the emperor surrendered before that happened.

Moriyah subsequently graduated from the University of Kyoto

and entered the Treasury Ministry. His father died in 1949. But he soon acquitted himself well, resenting the old-fashioned fuddy-duddies in the Ministry. He subsequently pursued masters and doctorate courses in philosophy in Kyoto. But apparently he was more interested in politics. He ran for the Lower House elections in 1952 at the age of twenty-seven, the youngest of all the candidates in Japan at that time. He proposed to lower the candidate age to twenty to abolish 'age discrimination', expecting those aged from twenty to twenty-five would vote for him. The elections were the first ones after the end of the Allied occupation of Japan. Somehow, because Moriyah happened to be a son of a national rail official, the warden of the national rail hospital in Yonago, who happened to be a graduate of the Imperial University of Kyoto, came to provide him with the requisite organizational support. This hospital warden happened to be a member of the then popular Socialist Party. The warden said at that time, 'different opinions, but the same university, and the same countryman!' The local socialists, however, nominated a different candidate for the Yonago constituency, and Moriyah was not elected. He subsequently returned to Kyoto in order to raise funds, apparently for his future electoral ambitions, although he did not run for any election until Kyoto's mayoral elections in 1979, unsuccessfully challenging the communist incumbent.

Mihoko, as her older brother's virtual secretary, was somehow overwhelmed by his unpredictable and sustained political ambitions. She kept so busy that she actually remained unmarried until 1972 when she was forty-four. Even so, her fate was rather representative of a considerable percentage of Japanese women of the time, as a consequence of the fact that a large proportion of the young male population had perished in the war.

Mihoko knew of the discovery of a war-time Japanese soldier on a remote island in the Pacific. She was, however, too busy to be interested in that sort of news.

### **Shō-ichi's Health**

As for Shō-ichi, when he was called up for the Army at the age of twenty-six, he was already working as an independent tailor. There

was talk of marriage then. But the lapse of as long as thirty-one years thereafter (1941–72) appeared, by all standards, long enough to destroy any prospect of his being married. He was fifty-six when he was discovered. At the first press conference on Guam on 25 January 1972 with local journalists, one reporter said,

‘After you go back to Japan and get married, by all means come here on your honeymoon, please.’

‘It is too late.’ Shō-ichi replied, ‘I will not be getting married. No one would have me.’<sup>2</sup>

Shō-ichi had been shocked to see his face for the first time in a mirror hung on a wall of the Agana Police Headquarters on Guam during the previous evening of 24 January. He used to see his image reflected on the surface of water occasionally while in the jungle. However, he never saw his image so clearly. He saw a number of deep wrinkles on the darkened skin of his forehead and below his eyes. He was unable to believe that the image in the mirror was his. He never expected himself to appear such an old man. The sight traumatized him.<sup>3</sup>

A series of press conferences held on Guam, however, was more than sufficient to reveal that Shō-ichi was capable of communicating in his native Japanese language rather articulately. Indeed, he had a somewhat remarkable diplomatic sense, thanking the Americans for their kind treatment and promising to tell the Japanese back in Japan whom Shō-ichi had believed to harbour bitter resentment against the Americans deep inside their mind, how well they treated him on Guam.<sup>4</sup> He said so at the very first press conference on the day after he was found. At the farewell lunch party on 1 February, which the Governor Carlos Camacho of Guam organized for Shō-ichi, he shook hands with the Governor and said,

‘I had believed that the relationship between Japan and the United States was bad. After having come out of the hole, I have realized that we need to live in peace. I would like to preach aloud when I am back in Japan the need for a perpetual peace between the two nations.’<sup>5</sup>

Shō-ichi later said that he could not recall anything concerning

his capture, except that he believed that he was being imprisoned rather than hospitalized.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, his statements seem to have been, in fact, prayers and he was speaking tactically, almost sub-consciously, in order to survive. There was, of course, a degree of genuine amazement and embarrassment at the manner in which the Americans handled him. On 26 January 1972, at a press conference with some Japanese journalists and with his two former comrades on Guam who had earlier returned to Japan, present, he said, 'I had never expected that the Americans could be so kind to me'.<sup>7</sup>

In any case, it was surprising that his rational capabilities survived nearly twenty-eight years of life in the jungle, the last eight years of which were spent entirely on his own.

On his return to Japan on Wednesday, 2 February 1972, he said to the Health Minister Saitō who greeted him at the Haneda Airport in Tokyo, 'In order to report in detail how the Japanese garrison on Guam was defeated, I have here the shame of staying alive and returning home.'<sup>8</sup>

At the press conference soon after, Shō-ichi said,

'I, Shō-ichi Yokoi, thank you heartfelt for having welcomed me back in such great numbers.'

'I am ashamed of myself,' he grabbed hold of the corners of a table in front of him tightly in order to support his body and said, 'for having clung to my survival so long (rather than having died with honour). However, I have truly been wanting to tell you of the last days of our garrison on Guam . . . which, of course, you may have heard of already . . . But you do not know what happened afterwards. I have survived twenty-eight years on Guam to this day, forbearing and enduring a series of hardships and difficulties. Such difficulties cannot be easily expressed in words, but you may wish to ask questions about them. I will explain them in detail later, yes, as soon as I become well. Then, because nobody knows when our Japan may have to fight again in the future, my humble experience might be of some help to you. Believing so, I have maintained my survival in the jungle to this day. Please, I beg you to understand this first, and then ask me questions. I would like to write a book, as soon as I become well, so that you can read about my experience.'

'On top of this,' Shō-ichi then beat the table with his right hand

and said, 'because the heroic spirits of my dead comrades have still continued to haunt Guam, I have assembled them and have brought them back here to the homeland.'<sup>9</sup>

In June 1972, only four months later, Shō-ichi did not remember what he had said on these occasions.<sup>10</sup> He recalled that a nurse on Guam had told him that he had to make a speech on his return to Japan. He did not want to behave shamefully on that occasion, so that he took the step of consulting a visiting Japanese doctor about what he ought to say.<sup>11</sup> The doctor was unable to give him any particular 'instruction', however.

These speeches reflect what Shō-ichi thought he should say and indicate that Shō-ichi was trying to justify his survival and his return. In the psychological context, he was still harbouring some fear of court martial proceedings and execution.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, he was assuming that the 'Army Information Department' people were among his audience when he made these speeches.<sup>13</sup>

To corroborate Shō-ichi's fear, one Susumu Sawada, a soldier who was also in a patch of jungle on a Pacific island when Japan surrendered, wrote, 'if I had been taken a prisoner of war and court-martialled, my family register (*at the relevant government registry*) would have been tainted (*presumably with criminal offence entries*) and all members of my family would have suffered enough to precipitate death.'<sup>14</sup>

Sawada was referring to Code 2, Article 8 of the Codes of Conduct in Battle (*senjinkun*) circulated by the War Ministry on 8 January 1941:

Those who are mindful of their honour are strong. You shall always take heed to *the reputation of your family and community* and strive hard to live up to their expectations. *No one shall remain alive to incur the shame of becoming a prisoner of war.* No one shall die to leave any stain of crimes and wrongs behind. (Emphasis added by the present author.)

Strictly speaking, the Codes of Conduct in Battle were the codes of soldiers' ethics and had no force of law. They elaborated on the Emperor's Sermons to His Military Servicemen dated 4 January 1882<sup>15</sup> which said, 'thou shalt deem thy duty heavier than a

mountain and thy life lighter than a feather'. The Sermons were delivered a year after the French-style Army Criminal Law was decreed (Decree of 1881, No. 69). The Sermons dealt with the ideological, religious and moral values of 'The Divine Emperor's Army', as opposed to the secular legal norms of the kind adopted among the 'civilized nations' of the time. The Imperial Sermons remained unaltered when the German-style Army Criminal Law was enacted anew by the Statute of 1908, No. 46. The wars of attrition in China in the 1930s witnessed the rapidly deteriorating morale and disciplines of 'The Divine Emperor's Army' so much so that the War Ministry found it necessary to circulate a plainer and more up-to-date version of the Emperor's Sermons of 1882. This was the War Ministry's Codes of Conduct in Battle of 8 January 1941, declaring, among others, 'divine spirits are watching you!' (Code 2, Article 1); 'mind your chastity!' (Code 3, Article 1, Paragraph 8). Sentencing severity of the Army Criminal Law was subsequently increased by the Statute of 1942, No. 35.

Conscripts tended to believe that the codes were enforceable by courts martial, and above all, by communal shaming of their family members. Due to the legacy of the pre-modern 'joint and several' punishment of family members and communal shaming among the peasant class from which conscripts were enlisted, the Code 2, Article 8's reference to the reputation of one's family and community was more than sufficient to generate the kinds of fear Sawada harboured, even if the War Ministry did not intend such consequences. Informed English sources tend to call Code 2, Article 8 the 'Bushido' code, as its extolment of honourable death over humiliation at the hands of the enemy reflected the medieval Japanese ethics applicable to *bushi* ('armed sergeants' in Chinese pronounced with a Japanese accent) also known as *samurai* ('servicemen' in Japanese) who comprised the ruling class. Conscripts interpreted the code in the peasant way, rather than in the *bushi* way. A *bushi* was expected to execute himself (by cutting his stomach open), whereas a peasant was expected to be executed by the authorities and his family members shamed in the community.

Shō-ichi was, in any case, surprisingly articulate and superbly astute in manoeuvring to avert the perceived threat. Certainly, he

complained of some visual and auditory hallucinations, i.e. ghosts of a number of very specific individual dead comrades of his accusing him of going back to Japan alone, begging him to take them with him to Japan. However, apart from such apparent symptoms of psychological disorder associated with the guilt of a survivor, there was not much to worry about regarding his rational, intellectual and communicative capabilities. His memoirs amply corroborate this point. A Guam Memorial Hospital doctor in charge opined that Shō-ichi's rather sophisticated handicraft might have helped his intellectual capabilities to stay awake.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of his physical health, an internist doctor in charge at Guam Memorial Hospital said on 26 January, two days after Shō-ichi's capture, that Shō-ichi's internal organs were normal, and that he could go home the following day, although there was deficiency in some vitamins.<sup>17</sup> At the physical examination on 2 February 1972 in Tokyo, he was 171.2 cm (5 feet 7 inches) in height; 52 kg (8 stones) in weight; his temperature was 37.2 degrees Celsius (98.96 degrees Fahrenheit); the pulse rate was 90, the blood pressure was 160/116 (systolic/diastolic); his grip power was 13 kg on his right, and 11 kg on his left.<sup>18</sup> These data suggest the image of a very thin, pale, frightened man in a depressed mood. There were light symptoms of megaloblastic anaemia, paralysis of peripheral nerves and beriberi. There was a corresponding serious deficiency in folic acid (the cause of anaemia) and a slight deficiency in vitamin B1 (the cause of beriberi). A deficiency in folic acid may result in a deficiency in vitamin B12, which may in turn result in, in most serious cases, pernicious anaemia and the degeneration of the nervous system. However, no such deficiency in vitamin B12 was reported. Simply, the rest of the vitamins were said to have been sufficient. Shō-ichi appeared to have suffered from pellagra,<sup>19</sup> but no corresponding deficiency in nicotinic acid (a B vitamin) was detected. The level of protein in his serum was 6.3 grammes/decilitre and was rather low. In short, his nutritional level was low but not malnutrition, and allegedly not unbalanced. The serious deficiency in folic acid, causing the reduced production of red blood cells in the bone marrow, could have been ameliorated by eating liver, yeast extracts and green leafy vegetables. Shō-ichi

seemed to have been particularly conscious about his need to eat liver and green leafy vegetables on Guam. This point may be suggesting that the deficiency caused him to want these in particular.

The x-ray showed his twelfth thoracic vertebra as being smashed a long time before. There were symptoms of osteoporosis.<sup>20</sup> There were also traces of gastric ulcers, and he was suffering from slight gastric hyperacidity and chronic gastritis.<sup>21</sup> There were no parasite eggs in his stools. This seemed rather remarkable in view of his diet on Guam. The rest of the internal organs did not show any serious irregularity, nor had he any serious arteriosclerosis, which is arguably, the disease of 'civilization'. He had lost seven of his teeth and four of them decayed (degrees 3 to 4). He was suffering from gingivitis, i.e. the inflammation of his gums throughout.

He suffered from acute bronchitis in the Tokyo hospital on 5 March 1972, the first respiratory infection after decades of his solitary life on Guam. It was remarkable that the person who had been suffering from serious anaemia had successfully resisted infection until that time. Similarly, Suniyon (Teruo Nakamura), another Japanese soldier who was found on 18 December 1974 on Morotai, the northern Moluccas, Indonesia, also suffered from infection for the first time after he was captured and hospitalized.<sup>22</sup> It was truly surprising that neither Shō-ichi nor Suniyon ever suffered from tropical diseases transmitted by mosquitoes such as malaria and dengue. Perhaps, for a person who had been entirely on his own for nearly three decades, the sudden fall into circumstances beyond his control might have been enough to trigger infection. After the bronchitis, Shō-ichi regained weight and strength fairly quickly. However, his recovery from the folic acid deficiency was very slow.

Somewhat remarkably, Shō-ichi's electroencephalogram did not show any brain wave patterns of deep sleep even half a year after his discovery on Guam.

In retrospect, the spinal injury, the chronic gastritis and, perhaps, the limited peripheral nerve paralysis might have been the causes or earlier symptoms of the infertility, stomach cancer, and Parkinson's Disease-like tremors and stiffness in his mobility and facial expression, respectively. But for the moment, his physical problems did not appear serious, and indeed, he seemed to Japanese doctors

substantially younger than his age. The biggest and foremost worry at that time seemed to have been his adjustability to the highly modernized post-war society of Japan after the more than ten thousand days of survival in the wild.

This worry had clearly destroyed at least one possible marriage, in so far as one lady's family refused to let her proceed to marry him.

## **The Marriage**

On 25 April 1972, Shō-ichi returned to his hometown, Nagoya. He visited his mother's tomb and embraced the tombstone.<sup>23</sup> He was then housed in the family of the Yokois. Because Shō-ichi was not a member of the Yokois by birth, he found it rather painful to be fed by them. After all, he was a man who had been employed as early as the age of fifteen. He was living virtually on his own for twenty-eight years on a remote island in the Pacific. He was therefore seeking to become independent, possibly as a tailor again, as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup>

Originally, as was customary in Japanese society, a number of meetings between Shō-ichi and prospective brides were arranged to see whether or not they would get on well enough to marry. In the case of one such meeting, the designated woman, who was said to be a nursery nurse, was unable to keep the appointment. Mihoko happened to be substituted in place of her. She knew of the discovery of a Japanese soldier on a remote island in the Pacific, but was not particularly interested in that. She was simply asked to see the former soldier, as it were, to enable those who had arranged the meeting to pretend that it actually took place.

The meeting in Nagoya on 13 August 1972 was opened by Shō-ichi's blatant question,

'Have you also come to gawp at me (out of curiosity)?'

Mihoko was upset and offended by this question, but mindful of the presence of those who had arranged the meeting, she courteously remained silent as long as they were there.

When Shō-ichi and Mihoko were left alone, she exploded to him,

‘How rude are you to say, without greeting a lady first, whether she has come to gawp at you! Who on earth would undergo such a trouble as to take a bullet train from Kyoto all the way down to Nagoya, in order simply to gawp at you?’

‘Well,’ she continued, ‘don’t rush. Otherwise, you will not be able to find a suitable spouse.’

Shō-ichi quickly responded, ‘I like a person who is kind enough to scold me.’

Mihoko recalls that it was a tactical victory for Shō-ichi. He was a very clever man, able to read the other one’s mind instantaneously. She admits that she was entrapped by his trick. Well, not exactly. Shō-ichi appeared very attractive as a man, totally unrefined, unpolished and unspoiled by society. Shō-ichi had a good sense of humour, too. Mihoko was shown a recording of Shō-ichi’s appearance on a certain television programme before the meeting. A presenter asked about Shō-ichi’s confidence in finding a spouse. He pulled out a piece of paper (which is ‘kami’ in Japanese) from his pocket and swung it in the air. Mihoko realized that this was his joke: ‘only God (“kâmi”<sup>25</sup>) knows.’

Thereafter, Shō-ichi and Mihoko spent two hours together in a garden.

At a dinner, a number of restaurant waitresses asked for Shō-ichi’s autograph. As he gave them his autograph, one of them asked him to write something for Mihoko as well. Shō-ichi wrote a poem (*haiken*):

*‘Kimiomou kokoro-ni masaru meijō-no tsuk?’*,

which read literally,

‘(You are like) the Moon over the renowned Nagoya Castle,  
(shining) more (beautifully) than my own heart longing for you.’

This was effectively his proposal, and she accepted.

When they parted from each other, Shō-ichi reminded Mihoko, ‘Do not change your mind!’

After the meeting, Shō-ichi said to Mr and Mrs Uchikawa, his friends from the school days, who had arranged a number of such meetings,

'I have finally come across the person whom I have been seeking in my mind.'

The very first encounter was enough to make Mihoko realize the degree of Shō-ichi's alienation. He was a celebrity back in Japan. Everyone was curious about him because he was like a living fossil, a species which, like the coelacanth, was thought to be as extinct as dinosaurs. The media both in Japan and in other parts of the world were reporting on him as an Imperial Japanese soldier who was thought to have become extinct decades before. Shō-ichi was aware that people's curiosity about him was transitory, and of the kind which people have for rare items in a museum. But Mihoko might well have sensed an even far deeper fundamental sense of alienation in Shō-ichi's heart. Shō-ichi never really belonged to any family. Mihoko recalls that she thought that someone had to help this victim of the war back to humanity.

She identified herself as a victim of the war, implying that it was because of the war that she remained unmarried until that time. Her romance at the age of sixteen had been brutally destroyed by the war, presumably due to the policy of making university students become human cruise missiles and torpedoes.

Shō-ichi and Mihoko were engaged in October. The Ministry of Health and Welfare launched a thorough investigation into Mihoko to examine whether or not she was a fit and well person to marry this man of 'national' importance. They had already turned down one woman who had volunteered to marry Shō-ichi earlier. Mihoko had to produce a medical record. The marriage took place on 3 November 1972, after the Ministry had thoroughly cleared Mihoko for it.

At the ceremony, Shō-ichi recited the following poem (*uta*):

My friends in the Southern Ocean,  
I alone have come home.  
I marry a Kyoto maiden,  
feeling pain in my heart.  
For a great number of years  
I have yearned after this day.  
I have had in my dreams

*Afterwards*

and in my heart  
this image of mine,  
at this Atsuta Shrine,  
which vision I shall offer  
to the tomb of my father  
and my mother.<sup>26</sup>

2. THE ELECTIONS  
*'Do Not Destroy Paddy Fields!'*

In March 1973, Shō-ichi and Mihoko visited Guam on their honeymoon, responding to the invitation to do so at the first press conference on 25 January 1972, the day after Shō-ichi's discovery. Mihoko visited the underground shelter in which her husband spent his last eight years on Guam. Due to the sudden influx of a huge number of spectators (or tourists) from all over the world into the shelter, which they called, 'Yokoi Cave' by analogy with Robinson Crusoe, the shelter was already in a dilapidated condition.<sup>27</sup> The sight and odour horrified Mihoko. It was not a place for any human being to live in for a minute, she recalled.

The 'Yokoi Cave' did not survive long due to a number of factors, a period of neglect, tourism, earthquakes and extremely violent tropical storms. Shō-ichi was requested to restore it by the Guam tourist authorities, but he firmly refused to do so, saying,

'I do not have any good memories of it. If you lived in the hole for a week, you would understand.'<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, Mr De Gracia, one of the two Guamenians who discovered Shō-ichi, then dug its replica nearby, which survives to this day as a major tourist attraction of this island.

In the meantime, a new house was built for Shō-ichi and Mihoko on a plot of land donated by the head family of the Yokois in Sennonji, Nagoya. A building company offered him a free house, which Shō-ichi resisted and partly financed from other donations. Because Shō-ichi was intending to become a tailor again, the house was built in a fairly 'Western' style with flat roofing. Shō-ichi,

however, requested Moriyah, his brother by marriage, to design a Japanese garden.

It was reported, when Shō-ichi was discovered, that every member of the Japanese Cabinet (twenty in total) pledged to give him a hundred thousand Yen each; and that every member of both Houses of the Japanese legislature (736 in total) pledged to give him fifty thousand Yen each. It was expected that Shō-ichi would receive 38.8 million Yen (126,000 US Dollars) in total. In reality, only the Prime Minister's gift of hundred thousand Yen (325 US Dollars) was actually disbursed. Due to the fall of the Yen after Japan's defeat, Shō-ichi's salaries were reported to have amounted to less than 50,000 Yen (160 US Dollars).<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, his house was almost entirely financed by gifts from the private sector,<sup>30</sup> indeed, from those people whose loved ones had 'disappeared' in the war front, and who somehow regarded Shō-ichi to be representative of their loved ones. Of course, there were people who acted purely benevolently, like Mr and Mrs Kakurō Tsuruta, who kept sending Shō-ichi 20,000 Yen every month until Mrs Tsuruta's death in 1997 (65 US Dollars in 1972 which eventually became 118 US Dollars in 1997 in terms of purchasing power parity).

The Health Ministry was in charge of military pensions and allowances for the wounded and ill. The pensions were to be tripled for the period of active combat duties and tripled for the period of service overseas. Both Manchuria and Guam were categorized as overseas. Taking Shō-ichi's service on Guam alone, ignoring for the moment the earlier period of three years in Manchuria, the length of his service on Guam amounted to twenty-seven years and ten months. Due to the double tripling factors, this was to become ninefold: 250 years and 6 months. A huge sum was expected. However, following subsequent changes to the Pensions Act 1923,<sup>31</sup> the maximum limit of forty years was imposed by a decision of the relevant cabinet minister.

Accordingly, the first annual amount of his pension in 1972 was merely 132,894 Yen (about 432 US Dollars). Shocked by this figure, the Governor of Hokkaido, Mr Dōnouchi, petitioned the Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka (July 1972 – December 1974) who

instructed the relevant minister to no avail. The basis of the pension calculation seemed to Shō-ichi that his 'service' on Guam, which amounted more than 10,000 days, was interpreted as not 'service to the state' but entirely of his own making. This caused Shō-ichi a considerable heartbreak. When he protested at this calculation, an official said, 'Are you acting against the state?' This effectively silenced Shō-ichi.

Due to his injuries, Shō-ichi also received the annual allowances of more or less the same amount as his pension (154,050 Yen, about 501 US Dollars, in 1972).

While the basis of calculation never changed, the amount of pension and injury allowances was altered almost every year as the government tried to keep up with inflation, and in 1996, Shō-ichi's pensions were 1,099,500 Yen (about 6,430 US Dollars in terms of Purchasing Power Parity) and his injury allowances were 1,125,000 Yen (about 6,579 US Dollars in terms of PPP).

In any case, Shō-ichi was quick to realize the fall of the Yen. On 26 January 1972, two days after his discovery, Mr Nakamura of the Health Ministry<sup>32</sup> gave him 100,000 Yen (about 325 US Dollars) in cash. Shō-ichi counted ten notes each worth ten thousand Yen, and said, 'The biggest note used to be a hundred Yen. The value of currency seems to have changed a lot.' Mr Nakamura said, 'Yes, the value [of goods, i.e. consumer price index] is now inflated to about three-hundred-fold the pre-war figure.'<sup>33</sup> Shō-ichi later recalled that when he was given a copy of a Japanese magazine before seeing Mr Nakamura, he realized the Yen's dramatic fall, because that kind of magazine used to cost dozens of sen (one hundredth of a Yen) before the war but it actually cost hundreds of Yen, which suggested that the Yen became nearly a thousandth of its pre-war value. Shō-ichi was beginning to grasp the reality and magnitude of Japan's defeat.

It is perhaps of value to mention the fate of Suniyon, an ethnic Taiwanese (Ami tribe) soldier of the Imperial Japanese Army, who was discovered in December 1974 in Morotai, Indonesia (and whose name was 'Teruo Nakamura' in Japanese and 'Li Guang-Hui' in Chinese). The Japanese government officially paid him 380,000 Yen (1,228 US Dollars) as the unpaid salaries for thirty years of

service. On top of it, there was a gift of 100,000 Yen (325 US Dollars) presumably from the Japanese prime minister, the gift of 6,500 US Dollars presumably from the members of the Japanese legislature, the gift of 5,000 US Dollars presumably from the Japanese cabinet ministers, and the gift of 1,250 US Dollars from the Provincial Governor of Taiwan (as distinct from the President of the Republic of China), and the gift from a variety of private sector people in Japan totalling well over 10 million Yen (32,000 US Dollars). All of this seemed to have been genuinely disbursed.<sup>34</sup> Even if the Japanese government pledges had never been disbursed, the private gifts turned out to be an astronomical sum by the standard of the poor communities of ethnic minorities in Taiwan.

Suniyon gave all the gifts to his only son, Hiroshi, who was born before Suniyon volunteered to join the Imperial Japanese Army in 1944. Hiroshi became the richest man among the local Ami tribesmen. His personality was completely altered. He lost his friends. He was isolated from the local community and went to the capital Taipei. In the meantime, Suniyon became addicted to nicotine, alcohol and betel nuts, which had addictive stimulant effects, so much so that Suniyon developed lung cancer which killed him some four years after his return to Taiwan, on 15 June 1979.<sup>35</sup>

This tragedy did not fall upon Shō-ichi, who received modest pensions and allowances and a good number of private gifts. The regular payment of a modest sum was perhaps better than the award of a huge lump sum. It was perhaps not money which destroyed Suniyon, however. On his return, Suniyon found his wife, Sampi ('Yoshiko' in Japanese and 'Lan-Ying' in Chinese), having married another man. (That man had fathered no children with Sampi and brought up Suniyon's son, Hiroshi, and persuaded Sampi to go back to her first husband.) By contrast, Shō-ichi remained unmarried until he returned to Japan, and married Mihoko thereafter. Suniyon found no future back on his home island. Shō-ichi found 'a pathway to tomorrow' with his wife, Mihoko. It was Mihoko who gave the original title, 'A Pathway To Tomorrow' to Shō-ichi's memoirs, which she helped draft, not as a piece to justify his survival against the perceived threat of the Imperial Army's court martial proceed-

ings, but as a piece to thank the public for their encouragement and help in order to go forward.

On 8 January 1973, still a year before the publication of his memoirs, Shō-ichi was interviewed by an American journalist, who asked,

‘What do you think of Japan’s prosperity?’

Shō-ichi said,

‘If the supply of petrol stops, it is like a tower on moving sands.’

Mihoko thought that he spoke strange things because he did not know the thirty years of Japan’s economic recovery.

In October the same year, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East and the concerted financial offensive of the Arab countries, the petrol price soared. The resulting ‘oil shock’ truly caused the Japanese public to realize the accuracy of Shō-ichi’s, i.e. a former logistics lance corporal’s, warning at the logistical vulnerability of Japan’s economy. The oil shock also destroyed Shō-ichi’s own confidence at financing himself as a tailor. Fortunately, by then, Shō-ichi’s schedule was full up several months ahead with appointments for seminars, conferences, television programmes, etc. He was beginning to emerge as a critic of the wasteful modern lifestyle based on his experience of having survived extreme deprivation in the wild. His disenchantment with the wasteful aspects of modern civilization was partly recorded in the *National Geographic* magazine for March 1974.

It was such a period when Shō-ichi was persuaded to run in Japan’s upper house elections in June–July 1974. There was one particular man who persuaded Shō-ichi to do so: his brother by marriage, Moriyah. He had been seeking to act as the chief of staff of somebody else who was willing to run for national elections ever since his own election in 1952. His sister’s marriage was a complete surprise for him. He had been interested in Shō-ichi, however, from a long time earlier than his sister was. Moriyah’s earlier experience in the navy was perhaps enough to stir up great curiosity in a soldier who had miraculously survived on a remote island in the Pacific on his own for so long. The soldier calculated his age accurately by

observing the waxing and waning of the Moon.<sup>36</sup> The succinct and very astute answers Shō-ichi gave at the press conferences were more than sufficient to impress Moriyah that Shō-ichi was a man of great intelligence, extreme resilience and formidable self-composition with whom Moriyah himself could not possibly compete. Moriyah began to hope that Shō-ichi could cause another miracle in the Japanese legislature.

Shō-ichi's last-minute decision to run for the upper house elections came as a complete surprise for Mihoko. But she says Shō-ichi was the kind of person who would not do things with which he did not agree. Shō-ichi had his own appeal for the Japanese electorate. In particular, Shō-ichi was persuaded when his brother by marriage said, 'a member of the House of Councillors has a fixed term of six years. You can spend the first three years learning politics and spend the last three years in the service of the public.' The following is an excerpt from Shō-ichi's platform submitted to the Central Electoral Commission:

1. Money politics and inflation threaten Japan's future;
2. Restore the true Japanese heart. Restore the respect for parents and teachers;
3. Seek self-sufficiency in food. Do not destroy paddy fields.<sup>37</sup>

The first one was a criticism of the then Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's manner of governing Japan. Kakuei Tanaka was said to have seized the leadership of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), hence the premiership, by way of the influence he generated through money. Shō-ichi underpinned his appeal by the very frugal manner in which he conducted his own campaign. He spent as little as 136,480 Yen (440 US Dollars) at the time when 5,000 million Yen (16 million US Dollars) was said to be necessary to get elected.<sup>38</sup> He spent less than three ten-thousandths of the amount said to be necessary to pass the winning post. Shō-ichi stood for the nationwide constituency of fifty-four members. It was not, at that time, a proportional representation system, but a system of the first fifty-four individual candidates passing the winning post.

Shō-ichi's second appeal, namely, the restoration of the true

Japanese heart was superficially shared by the contemporary conservative candidates, for example, Teru Miyata of LDP, an NHK newscaster who was a national celebrity as a chairman of the popular end-of-the-year song contest every 31 December, and who was the first to pass the post of the fifty-four-member nationwide constituency; Akiko Santō of LDP, an actress, who was the fifth;<sup>39</sup> and Minoru Genda, the then chairman of the LDP National Defence Committee and a former Chief of the General Staff for the Air Self-Defence Force, was the thirty-seventh.<sup>40</sup> This person proudly manifested himself as the ‘Chief of Staff of the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor Born and Grown in Hiroshima,’ and stressed the paramount importance of teaching *Volksgeschichte* (‘national history’) to the youth in order to root them back into *Volksggeist* (‘national spirit’).<sup>41</sup> His key concepts were easier to translate more accurately into German than into English.

By contrast, Shō-ichi’s appeals were decidedly far more old-fashioned than these LDP candidates. Shō-ichi called Japan by its seventh century poetic appellation, the ‘Land Rich in Reeds and as great a number of times as a thousand five hundred times Harvestable Mouth-watering Rice Crops.’<sup>42</sup> This was mentioned in connection with Shō-ichi’s third appeal, ‘do not destroy paddy fields’. In 1972, Japan’s self-sufficiency in terms of domestically supplied calories divided by total calorie consumption (per person per day) was 57 per cent, down from 76 per cent in 1961.<sup>43</sup> The rate went further down to 40 per cent in 1998. The cultivated land was reduced from the peak of 6 million hectares in 1965 to 4.74 million hectares in 2002 despite the fact that the population increased from 98 million to 127 million in the same period. By contrast, the United Kingdom increased its calorie self-sufficiency from around 50 per cent in the 1970s to more than 70 per cent in the 1990s. West Germany, too, steadily increased its from 67 per cent in 1961 to 84 per cent in 1989.<sup>44</sup> By the standard of these comparable similarly sized industrialized countries, Shō-ichi’s appeal in 1974 was sensible, and far from ‘anachronistic’.

In terms of results, Shō-ichi obtained 262,547 votes, which was seventy-third among the total 112 candidates.<sup>45</sup> He failed to pass the post of the 54-member constituency. Still, Shō-ichi, who had

no party affiliation and spent as little as 136,480 Yen (440 US Dollars), fared not too badly. Shō-ichi attracted more votes than the bottom three of the LDP candidates, including Mr Saka, to whom the entirety of the powerful Mitsubishi Group of companies gave its explicit organizational support, urging its employees and their families to vote for him.<sup>46</sup> Shō-ichi, by criticizing inflation, apparently registered the highest ratio of votes to expenditure (two votes per Yen, which was, in 1974, about 600 votes per US Dollar). As it seems, the electorate might well have been fed up with the money politics, which Shō-ichi so powerfully criticized.

After the defeat, Shō-ichi said that he heard heaven's voice, and that to hear heaven's voice was enough once.<sup>47</sup>

As soon as Shō-ichi stood for the elections, most of the invitations to television programmes, seminars and conferences were cancelled, including the invitation to the Emperor Hirohito's party to plant young trees. Shō-ichi was shunned by society. Because of the return of Sub-Lieutenant Hiro'o Onoda from Lubang, the Philippines, in March 1974, Shō-ichi's record as the longest survivor of the Imperial Japanese Army had been surpassed, not merely by the length of survival, but also by the rank. Onoda had effectively put a full stop to the Yokoi boom among the Japanese media circle. Shō-ichi tended to be seen to have stood for national elections in order to remain a media hero.

In retrospect, however, Mihoko recalls nostalgically that their isolation from the media due to the elections enabled Shō-ichi and Mihoko to lead a very quiet, enjoyable and meaningful life for a while. Mihoko thinks that the intense media demands from 1972 to 1974, if it had continued any longer, might well have brought about Shō-ichi's death. The media contact might well have equally changed Shō-ichi's personality. She described the quiet and happiest period which followed the elections as 'a warm sunny spot in winter'.

Why winter? It was winter partly because they were unable to have a child. Both of them had passed child-bearing age when they married.

Shō-ichi and Mihoko visited Hiroshima in October 1974 to begin their mental journey. In 1975, Shō-ichi happened to come across a

former colleague of his at the Aichi Abacus School at which both of them had studied from fourteen to fifteen years old, after forty years of separation. The colleague was Shinpei Seisei Aoki, then a renowned potter and a member of the governing body of the Japan Art Exhibition. In 1976, hearing of Shō-ichi's interest in clay pottery, Mr Tsuruta, a financial supporter of Shō-ichi, commissioned him to make a hundred Japanese tea cups to celebrate Mr Tsuruta's seventy-seventh birthday, which was called in Japan, the 'age of joy'. At first, Shō-ichi asked a local potter to make cups with Shō-ichi's autograph imprinted. This did not satisfy Shō-ichi. He then went to a free pottery school in a local young persons park with Mihoko, in order to undertake Mr Tsuruta's kind commission.<sup>48</sup> Having performed Mr Tsuruta's commission entirely on his own, Shō-ichi bought his first pottery kiln and installed it in his own house in 1979. It was named 'Mushin-an', literally, 'a hut in which to seek nothingness in one's heart', which condition was thought to be necessary to be awakened by 'truth' in Buddhism.

Clay pottery suited Shō-ichi, who had been good at handicrafts. There was pleasure in creating something and there were opportunities to realize himself. He made everything to his satisfaction, down to the type of glaze. Those equivalents on the market did not satisfy him. He discovered that the ashes of the leaves of cherry, holm oak and apple trees, and of chestnut burs produced his favourite colours.<sup>49</sup> He eventually discovered that he liked entirely handmade pottery without a wheel. The Ainus did not use a wheel either.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Shō-ichi's handmade loom on Guam, also, turned out to be identical to the Ainus' loom.<sup>51</sup> The same function made the same form. Somehow, Shō-ichi's artistic taste seems to have been similar to that of the Ainus. Shō-ichi's simple handmade cups and pots were suitable to meet the taste of connoisseurs of the Japanese tea ceremony and *ikebana* (the traditional Japanese art of flower arrangement).

In June 1980, Shō-ichi held a personal exhibition of his pottery at the prestigious Mitsukoshi department store in Ginza, Tokyo. Originally, Shō-ichi's agent tried another department store in Ginza, Tokyo. But the shop was closed on that day. He therefore went to Mitsukoshi next door, which agreed immediately.<sup>52</sup> The success at

Mitsukoshi in which all the exhibits were sold on a single day, stimulated the return of a great number of invitations to television programmes, seminars and conferences. This was because it had been proven by then that Shō-ichi was no longer seeking any political career. Mihiko had to strive very hard to control the schedule lest Shō-ichi damage his health. Due to the old and severe spinal injury on Guam, Shō-ichi was unable to remain standing very long.

There were exhibitions of his pottery, most often at Mitsukoshi, every year up to 1984, when Shō-ichi had two cataract operations in a row, the right eye in June and the left eye in December. In March 1985, Shō-ichi had surgery to remove two thirds of his stomach due to cancer. These health problems marked the end of the peak of Shō-ichi's active social life. By that time, he had published his second and third books, '*Buji-ga Ichiban*' (The best is to live without happening), from Chūōkōron in 1983, and '*Motto Komare*' (Have More Difficulties), from Shōgakukan, in 1984. There were recordings and the broadcast of a series of programmes on Asahi Television, entitled, 'Shō-ichi Yokoi and the Seven Beauties' in these years.

From 17 to 20 April 1986, Shō-ichi and Mihoko visited Guam to see the Talofofu village commissioner who had invited them. This tour turned out to be the last of Shō-ichi's visits to Guam.

By this time, Shō-ichi seemed to have felt some nostalgia for Guam. His experience on Guam was very complex. It was the island where about 20,000 of his approximately 21,000-strong comrades died.<sup>53</sup> His more than ten thousand days of survival on the island, which were spent when Shō-ichi was at the prime of his life, were mostly toil and trouble. Mihoko remembers that Shō-ichi often screamed at night. A few days before his death, Shō-ichi still occasionally woke up at night for fear of being chased by the enemy. He had obviously had a series of frightening experiences. Mihoko does not say a lot, but it seems clear that Shō-ichi was suffering from a fairly severe post-traumatic stress disorder.

In fact, on 2 February 1972, when he was asked on his way back to Japan for the first time after his discovery, whether or not he missed Guam, he said, 'No. Never, again.' He kept shaking his head quickly and intensely, gazing at his swollen feet, 'I do not want to go there any more, although I may have to in order to say

thank you in a few years time . . .’ (He became unable to speak any more.)<sup>54</sup>

Mihoko said that Shō-ichi in later years tended to display considerable enthusiasm in revisiting Guam. They visited Guam more than ten times, admittedly including those visits organized by television companies. Shō-ichi was even invigorated by an invitation from Guam, during the time when he was unable to accept invitations from within Japan due to his ill health. This was precisely the case when he was invited to visit the Talofofu village on Guam in April 1986.

What changed Shō-ichi?

Shō-ichi’s memoirs published in February 1974 already showed his nostalgia for Guam, when he mentioned the genuine freedom of mind which he enjoyed on Guam and lost in Japan (Chapter 15). This freedom seems to be the clue.

Shō-ichi’s nostalgia for Guam was arguably the other side of the same coin of his disillusionment with Japan and his growing disenchantment with modern civilization. He said he never thought of committing suicide on Guam. But he said that he thought about committing suicide for the first time when he was hospitalized back in Tokyo from 2 February to 25 April 1972. Among a great number of letters received from the members of the Japanese public, there were a few letters accusing him of ‘cowardice’ and ‘desertion’, which used to be capital offences under Article 75 of the repealed Army Criminal Law.<sup>55</sup> These letters urged him to cut his stomach open to execute himself in the manner of a medieval Japanese *samurai*.<sup>56</sup> This magnified Shō-ichi’s existing fear of court martial proceedings and execution.

Also, whenever he appeared on a television programme, published a new book, or appeared in a newspaper, he was assailed by this kind of malicious and anonymous letters and telephone calls. For example, Mihoko was woken at three o’clock in the morning by a sudden telephone call, the lady at the other end crying and shouting ‘Give me [this household’s] father back!’

The letters often said,

‘Who do you think you are to be entitled to speak? You must be satisfied with the luck that you have come back alive!’

Somebody sent Shō-ichi a razor with a note saying,  
'You are the shame of the Imperial Army. Die.'

All were consequences of jealousy. *The New York Times* reporting on Shō-ichi's return to his birthplace actually mentioned some similar deep jealous resentments on the part of those who had been bereaved of their loved ones in the war.<sup>57</sup> Mihoko thinks that their anonymous harassments caused Shō-ichi's depression and stomach cancer.

Shō-ichi repeatedly said that today's Japan was not the Japan which those, who had been left behind on the border of life and death in a remote war front, had dreamt of seeing again, an arcadia-like green Japan. After all, Shō-ichi was a man who did not hesitate to insist that electric trains were superior to cars, in defiance of comment by a local journalist on Guam that Japan was the world's second largest manufacturer of cars. Shō-ichi said so the day after he came out of the jungle.<sup>58</sup> When an English-speaking journalist asked him at his wedding press conference what he thought of Japan's pollution, Shō-ichi said that a Guam doctor found mercury from his hair sample, suggesting that pollution was a global problem. Shō-ichi liked growing organic vegetables in the field adjacent to his garden, which he rented from the neighbours. He did not like the wasteful practice of modern times. He urged people to live frugally and to manufacture things, rather than to purchase and to throw away. By writing the third and the last of his books, '*Motto Komare* (Have More Difficulties)', Shō-ichi meant that difficulties forced people to invent something and made human beings truly distinguishable from animals as *homo sapiens*.

'Do not destroy paddy fields.'

Shō-ichi's electoral slogan in the summer of 1974 was the beginning of his life-long campaign of restoring 'good old Japan', which was materially poorer, but safer, happier,<sup>59</sup> more beautiful and definitely more ecologically friendly than Japan in 1972 and after. In early 2005, more than 1,300 scientists from ninety-five countries published the first ever global inventory of natural resources with a conclusion that human beings are living way beyond their means and placing the ecosystem in a critical condition.<sup>60</sup> Although many

regarded Shō-ichi as a living fossil, it seems questionable who saw the present problems more clearly, Shō-ichi or those who mocked him and said he was anachronistic.

Shō-ichi yearned for a simple life.

### 3. BACK TO HUMANITY

#### *'I Return to the Emperor this Rifle Bearing the Imperial Crest'*

In the spring of 1991, the Emperor Akihito invited Shō-ichi to his spring garden party in the Imperial Castle in Tokyo. The Emperor Akihito had succeeded the late Emperor Hirohito in January 1989. Shō-ichi was among some two thousand guests who were similarly invited. The invitation was extended to Shō-ichi, not as a loyal soldier who had refused to surrender until as late as January 1972, but as a potter.

Since 1990, Shō-ichi had been in a wheelchair due to his degenerative motor neurone disease.<sup>61</sup> He had had surgery to repair his intestinal hernia, which first occurred in February 1991, three months before the garden party.

On the day, 9 May 1991, Shō-ichi rose from his wheel chair, and stood straight on his frail feet in order to wait for the emperor's approach. The sun shone warmly. Shō-ichi attracted the undivided attention of the Emperor Akihito, the Empress Michiko and Crown Prince Naruhito. Shō-ichi smiled and greeted them, inclining his half-paralysed body slightly forward, in his attempt to bow.

The emperor asked, 'How are you, Mr Yokoi? Are you feeling all right?'

'I have . . . so far . . . managed to survive . . .'<sup>62</sup>

This was all Shō-ichi managed to speak.

When he was discovered on Guam nineteen years before Shō-ichi had actually said, 'I would not know what to do' if he were to be allowed to see the emperor.<sup>63</sup>

An old loyal soldier was unable to see the being whom he had been taught to revere as god. When the soldier returned to the emperor a rifle bearing the imperial chrysanthemum crest, he had begun a new life. After a long journey back to humanity thereafter,

Shō-ichi, in his capacity as a potter, was able to see the new emperor, the symbol of new democratic Japan.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, Shō-ichi had a poem (*haikai*) in his pocket, which he intended to recite in the presence of the emperor.<sup>65</sup> However, as the emperor spoke to him directly, Shō-ichi was emotionally so overwhelmed that he became unable to recite it. The poem read,

Since I am not a kind of person to count on such a day as this, I shall walk in the Imperial Garden with my mind full of thankful thoughts.<sup>66</sup>

Six and half years later, on 22 September 1997, Shō-ichi died of a heart attack at the age of eighty-two.

Earlier in the year (1997), Mihoko's pelvis was broken when she was knocked down by an unidentified person from the top to the bottom of the stairs of a railway station in Tokyo. She was on her way back from the funeral of Mrs Tsuruta, one of the long-standing financial supporters of Shō-ichi's life back in Japan. It was likely to be the act of a man simply rushing towards a company or a train or something similar. After Mihoko's injury, Shō-ichi stopped eating. Shō-ichi had become by then almost entirely dependent on her due to his degenerative motor neurone disease paralysing him and ruining his mobility. Because of this, Shō-ichi had earlier expressed his wish to starve to death to share the experience of many of his colleagues on Guam.

Eventually, Shō-ichi and Mihoko were hospitalized in the same hospital in Nagoya. Mihoko remembered Shō-ichi's warm smile at realizing her survival. However, Shō-ichi still believed that she was permanently incapacitated, and he continued to refuse to eat anything. Mihoko recalled that a few minutes before Shō-ichi's death, he said:

I apologize to my friends for having survived them and come back alive alone.

Shō-ichi was the last survivor of the approximately 21,000-strong Japanese garrison on Guam, about 20,000 of whom were either

killed or committed suicide or starved very much under the force of the ‘no surrender’ code.<sup>67</sup>

Mihoko was in the rehabilitation room when Shō-ichi died. A few months later, Mihoko surprised her doctors by becoming able to walk without crutches again.

In accordance with Shō-ichi’s will, a memorial stone for Guam animals, which he had sacrificed for his own survival, was erected alongside his own tombstone.

On 24 June 2006, Shō-ichi’s house in Nagoya, which was built by Japan’s civil society, i.e. benevolent gifts of ordinary people, was opened to the public as the Yokoi Museum, displaying not only some of Shō-ichi’s handicrafts from his Guam years and a model of his hole, but also the pots and calligraphies of his later years as well as the garden he liked.

The faith which Shō-ichi had in the Japanese Emperor and his hope of the Japanese Empire’s final victory were formidable, but they turned out to be utterly hollow. Whereas people can maintain themselves with scarcely any human feelings, Shō-ichi was perhaps ‘coward’ enough to be unable to become a fanatical murderous martyr. He did not completely lose his last traces of humanity even when he was reduced to the habits of a wild animal in order to survive in the Guam jungle. He humorously said back in Japan to young children that he was simply good at ‘hide and seek’.

The marriage between Shō-ichi and Mihoko was salvation for both. Both found the spouse they had been looking for. They found a way forward. They nursed each other back to humanity. There were also ordinary people who supported their life from some distance. Their house in Nagoya is a lasting testimony to this story of the triumph of humanity, the triumph of humanity over such man-made alienation from humanity as epitomized by the ‘no surrender’ code, murderous martyrdom as well as moral decay and environmental destruction associated with modern civilization.

This English edition is intended to transmit to the world the message of Shō-ichi and Mihoko, suggesting ‘A Pathway to Tomorrow’, a narrow pathway on which fragile humanity may survive and even, through love, thrive.

# APPENDIX



## A NOTE ON THE RANKS OF ARMY PERSONNEL

Different countries have different ranks of military personnel. Different services have different ranks. And these change over time. Therefore, nothing is straightforward in contrasting the ranks of the Japanese army with the British and US counterparts.

Whilst the Japanese navy tended to look to the Dutch and British navies as its model, the Japanese army, gendarmerie and police looked to the French counterparts as their model from around 1868 to 1886. They thereafter began to Germanize their army, gendarmerie and police services. In the army, major changes of ranks continued to occur in 1905, 1932 and 1940. It is easier to translate the Japanese ranks into French or German than into English. And Britain and the US have had different ranks.

The chart below shows changes in Shō-ichi Yokoi's ranks over time:

Date	English Translation	Japanese	NATO
May 5, 1938	Logistics Private Second Class	Shichō Nitō-Hei	OR-1
Dec 1, 1938	Logistics Private First Class	Shichō Ittō-Hei	OR-2
Sep 15, 1940	Private First Class	Ittō-Hei	OR-2
Sep 1, 1942	Private Superior	Jōtō-Hei	OR-3
Mar 1, 1943	Lance Corporal or Leading Private	Hei-Chō	OR-4
Sep 1, 1944	Corporal	Go-Chō	OR-5
May 2, 1947	Sergeant	Gun-Sō	OR-6

Logistics Private Second Class (*shichō nitō-hei*) was introduced into the Japanese army as the translation of *conducteur de deuxième classe* in French. This is now graded as OR-1 (Other Ranks) in the NATO Codes for Grades of

Military Personnel. In the Japanese army, logistics servicemen (*conducteurs*) were regarded as inferior to infantry soldiers (*soldats*), even if they shared the same rank. By the Emperor's Order in Council of 1940, No. 581, the distinction between infantry and logistics was removed from the name of the ranks. But this hardly removed the prejudice against logistics servicemen.

Senior Private (*jōtō-bei*) was introduced into the Japanese army as the translation of *Gefreiter* ('free man') in German in 1886. *Gefreiter* corresponds with *caporal* in French, and both are now graded as OR-3. The NATO grade of OR-3 actually includes the British army's Lance Corporal, which has been the lowest NCO rank since 1965. However, this is simply misleading. The rank of *Gefreiter*, as *caporal* in French, has been the third lowest rank of private soldiers above *Oberschütze* ('higher shooter') or *soldat de première classe*.

Lance Corporal or Leading Private (*bei-chō*) was introduced into the Japanese army on 13 September 1940, as the highest enlisted rank, from either *Obergefreiter* or *Stabsgefreiter* in German, which generally corresponded with *caporal-chef* in French (before 1999). This French rank was graded as OR-4. From this NATO grade, it is possible to translate this *bei-chō* rank (literally, leading senior soldier) as 'corporal'. In fact, Shō-ichi commanded a 'section' (*buntaï*) and, as such, was called a 'squad leader' (*hanchō*), when he had this rank. His task seems to accord with that of Corporal in the British army. However, as in French and German practice, the rank of *bei-chō* was never an NCO rank. Therefore, this book translates this rank as 'Lance Corporal', which was, at the time of the Second World War, the appointment of a private to perform the function of corporal in the British army.

'Corporal' (*go-chō*) was introduced into the Japanese army in 1905 as the translation of *Unteroffizier* ('under officer') in German, i.e. the most junior NCO. This German rank is now graded as OR-5. There is no British army rank which is graded as OR-5. There has been a tendency to translate this German rank as 'Corporal' because of its NCO status. In fact, the Japanese word, *go-chō* was originally coined as the translation of *caporal* in French before 1886. In this book, *go-chō* is translated as Corporal, partly in order to signify that Shō-ichi was only promoted to an officer (non-commissioned) rank after he was assumed dead in September 1944.

Sergeant (*gun-so*) was introduced into the Japanese army as the translation of *sergent* in French, and remained to mean *Vizefeldwebel* or *Feldwebel* in German after 1886. This German rank is graded now as OR-6.

After the cessation of communications from the Japanese garrison on Guam after 10 August 1944, the navy decided that those who remained unaccounted for should be assumed dead on 10 August 1944. The army took a decision to promote those who remained unaccounted for, up to one rank on 1 September 1944. It was not until 30 September 1944 that the army followed the navy to register the death of those who remained unaccounted for on their family registers.

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When a serviceman was killed in action, the normal practice was to upgrade him two ranks. In Shō-ichi's case, he should have been promoted from the rank of Lance Corporal or Leading Private to Sergeant. This two-rank upgrading was effectuated only on 2 May 1947, in other words, the last day of Japan's pre-war constitution before the new constitution took effect. Why this was not done on 30 September 1944 remains a mystery.

Of course, Shō-ichi never knew of these 'posthumous' promotions to 'officer' ranks until he was 'discovered' in 1972. Until then, he remained a squaddie, or a GI. Therefore, 'Sergeant Yokoi' or 'Corporal Yokoi' represents simply the stereotype, which only developed after his discovery in 1972.

The charts below are designed to help the reader have some idea of how the Japanese ranks worked. These are mere translations, in other words, rough

NATO	Japanese	Nuances	GB (US)
OF-9	Tai-shō	Big General	General
OF-8	Chū-jō	Middle General	Lieutenant-General
OF-7	Shō-shō	Little General	Major-General
OF-6	n/a	n/a	Brigadier (-General)
OF-5	Tai-sa	Big Colonel	Colonel
OF-4	Chū-sa	Middle Colonel	Lieutenant-Colonel
OF-3	Shō-sa	Little Colonel	Major
OF-2	Tai-i	Big Captain	Captain
OF-1	Chū-i	Middle Captain	Lieutenant
OF-1	Shō-i	Little Captain	Second Lieutenant

NATO	Japan			GB	US
OR-9	Warrant Officer (Jun-i)	WO	WO	Warrant Officer 1	
OR-8	n/a		WO	Warrant Officer 2	1SG, MSG
OR-7	Staff Sergeant (Sō-Chō)	NCO	NCO	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant 1 <sup>st</sup> C
OR-6	Sergeant	NCO	NCO	Sergeant	
OR-5	Corporal	NCO	NCO	n/a	Sergeant
OR-4	Lance Corporal or Leading Private		NCO	Corporal	Corporal
OR-3	Private Superior			Lance Corporal	Private 1 <sup>st</sup> C
OR-2	Private 1 <sup>st</sup> C			Private	Private
OR-1	Private 2 <sup>nd</sup> C			Recruit	Recruit

## *Appendix*

equivalents, which are bound to contain some inaccuracies. The British and US ranks are purported to be those during the Second World War. The NATO grades are derived from the French or German counterparts of the Japanese ranks.

# NOTES



## Introduction

1. The Japanese Defence Agency, National Institute for Defence Studies, *Senshi Sōsho* (Military History Series) Vol. 6, Chō-un Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1967, p. 605.

## Chapter 1: Early Days (1915–September 1941)

1. Yokoi used two different Japanese words for the same thing, section (*buntai*) and squad (*ban*). This translation follows his distinction throughout.
2. This paragraph has been inserted by the editor.

## Chapter 2: To Where Are We Going To Be Posted? (February–March 1944)

1. Yokoi used two different Japanese words for the same thing, section (*buntai*) and squad (*ban*). This translation follows the original distinction throughout.
2. This sentence has been inserted by the editor from the original author's account given to *Chūnichī Newspaper*, Kaisō Yokoi Shōichi, No. 17, 5 July 1972.

## Chapter 3: 'Deployment' in Guam (March–July 1944)

1. This paragraph is slightly adapted and altered by the editor.
2. A local Chamorro word for a variety of lime.
3. The Chamorro word for cycad nut is *laguana*. *Federico* is Spanish (Frederick).
4. A Chamorro word for the local variety of hibiscus tree.
5. Infection by the parasitic round worm *Ascaris lumbricoides*.

6. A Chamorro word for the local variety of foxtail grass. Yokoi called it 'thatch' (*kaya*).
7. Yokoi wrongly described 'Agent Red' as 'tear-gas'. The secrets of the 'Epidemic Control and Water Supply Squad' could not have been known to him. Tear-gas was 'Agent Green'. 'Agent Red' was of greater toxicity, and caused severe vomiting and coughing. In July 1944, Prime Minister Tōjō forbade the use of any biochemical weapons, lest the Allies launch superior ones. As these agents were normally used against unprotected targets like popular resistance in China, it seems likely that the chemicals were on Guam for fear of local revolts.
8. This is around what is today's Potts Junction near the Anderson Air Force Base.
9. The Japanese Navy had already lost its aircraft carriers. Their fleet was soon to be nearly annihilated in the battle of Leyte, the Philippines, in October 1944.
10. This sentence has been inserted from its place in the original, at the beginning of Chapter 4.

#### **Chapter 4: The US Invasion: 'Attack the Americans and Die!'** **(21 July–6 August 1944)**

1. Yokoi realized in retrospect that this was not a worthwhile battle but one without military or strategic purpose or value.
2. The beginning of this chapter has been moved to the previous chapter. The official history is contained in the Japanese Defence Agency, National Institute for Defence Studies, *Senshi Sōsho* (Military History Series) vol. 6, *Chūbu Taiheiyō Rikugun Sakusen No. 1, Mariana Gyokusai-made* (Army Operations in the Central Pacific Theatre, up to the Loss of the Mariana Islands), Chō-un Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1967, pp. 569–70.
3. This paragraph has been inserted by the editor from its original place in Chapter 12.
4. This paragraph has been inserted by the editor.
5. In reality, it was the rainy season.
6. The Defence Agency, Military History Series Vol. 6, op. cit., pp. 582–90.
7. The US renamed it 'Nimitz Hill' after the war.
8. A hill north of Mt Chaochao. There is no local name for it.
9. Presumably, Talofoto Falls.

#### **Chapter 5: The Last Days of Our Platoon** **(6 August–September 1944)**

1. Defence Agency, Military History Series Vol. 6, op. cit., pp. 598–600.
2. A tropical aroid plant, *Colocasia esculenta*, with tuberous roots used as food [Polynesian].

3. This model was developed in 1939 (in the Imperial Japanese calendar, the year 2599), for the on-going war with China, with no anticipation of the war against the US, which already had automatic rifles. Yokoi was fortunate to have this model, because soldiers were often provided with the archaic Model 38 Arisaka, .256 (6.5 mm) calibre, five-bullet clip, bolt action, rifle, developed for the war with Russia in 1905 (the thirty-eighth year of the reign of the Emperor Mutsuhito).
4. Albizia julibrissin.
5. Article 75, Army Criminal Law (Statute of 1908, No. 46).

#### **Chapter 6: 'Survival War' in the Jungle (September 1944–May 1945)**

1. These Japanese plants had been introduced by the Japanese authorities as a part of the 'Japanization' of the occupied territories.
2. A Chamorro word for the local variety of hibiscus tree.
3. A Chamorro word for the local variety of pandanus tree. Yokoi called it 'tako' ('octopus' in Japanese) throughout.
4. According to Mrs Higuchi, there was no Fujita on the list of Japanese residents on Guam at that time. She thinks that it was either Shimohara, or Kōhatsu, Stock Farm.

#### **Chapter 7: Japan has Surrendered; Come out! (June–December 1945)**

1. Presumably, toffee.
2. Its capacity is four pints (one *shō* = 1.8039 litre) of sake.
3. Potsdam is a suburb of Berlin where, after the German surrender, Churchill (and later Atlee), Stalin and Truman met to decide on their treatment of Japan and its future.
4. Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945 at noon in standard Japanese time.

#### **Chapter 8: 'We Shall Never Surrender' (1946–1947)**

1. A lens was a permanent instrument to make fire on this tropical island. Matches and lighters ran out easily. The ability to make a fire was essential for survival in the jungle.
2. Yokoi did not know the name of this tree, but from his descriptions (given *passim*), Mrs Higuchi thinks it certain to be a banyan tree.
3. 'Haidako'. Uncertain. Yokoi regarded it as the creeping variety of *pandanus* tree.
4. Lieutenant Colonel Takeda and Major Satō were Staff Officers of the Headquarters of the 29th Division, to which Yokoi belonged.
5. Remember the night sky was particularly visible during the war-time blackout. When torchlight was seen from a distance through tree

- branches (i.e. near the horizon), it could be misidentified as a planet or a star.
6. Literally, 'I submit myself to the unlimited light' in Sanskrit, 'namō amitabhā', which is a standard prayer phrase of Japanese Buddhists.
  7. In Hindu-Buddhist belief, spirits exist permanently and keep coming back to this physical world. Depending on their deeds in their previous life in this world, they may be born as humans or animals or insects.
  8. An example of the pervasive Japanese mixed belief.

### Chapter 9: 'I Shall Survive On My Own' (1948)

1. A Chamorro word for the local variety of hibiscus tree.
2. Yokoi meant a clean Japanese-style (wooden) floor high above the ground.
3. Alligator pears are avocados. Yokoi might have confused them with mangoes, because their respective trees may have looked somewhat similar to each other. Japanese persimmon (*kaki*) is commercially grown in Israel and marketed worldwide with the name of 'sharon fruit'.
4. West Indian evergreen tree with large succulent fruits. *Annona muricata*.
5. Presumably a leech.
6. Presumably, a star fruit.
7. A Buddhist term, *satya* (truth in Sanskrit), was used in the original. The Japanese word, 'akiramu', literally 'to clarify', conventionally means under the Buddhist influence 'to give up' some *kleśa* (obsession or preoccupation hindering the pursuit of truth), here, lust. The wording in this paragraph, in particular, indicates that Yokoi's story was narrated through the mouth of his wife.
8. Indeed, it was the local variety of yam root crop.

### Chapter 11: 'No Way to Survive But to Hide Us Underground' (1950–1959)

1. Alligator pears are avocados. It is possible that Yokoi confused them with mangoes.

### Chapter 12: How to Get Off Guam? (1959–1962)

1. The original is 100 *monme* = 375 g, roughly 1 pound troy or 0.8 pound avoirdupois.

### Chapter 13: The Death of My Last Colleagues (c.1962–1964)

1. Yokoi's calendar was based on his observation of the waxing and waning of the Moon. He did not add any of the necessary seven intercalary

months every nineteen years. As a result, by this time, his calendar was expected to have been nearly seven months ahead. Occasionally, he adjusted his calendar by looking at the growth of fruits and nuts. According to Mrs Higuchi, Yokoi's description of the typhoon matches the typhoon Karen, the eye of which passed across Guam from east to west from 11 to 12 November 1962. Karen's sustained winds rose to an estimated 173 miles per hour (the US Navy's anemometer broke at 144 miles per hour), punctuated by gusts up to 207 miles per hour. Damage from the storm ran to well over 100 million US Dollars.

2. 'The fifteenth night' was the occasion on which the Japanese had a feast with special rice cakes which had been dedicated to celebrate the new year. The new year pine trees decorating their gates were removed at this feast.

#### **Chapter 14: Eight Years in Solitude (c.1964–1971)**

1. The typhoon Karen of 11–12 November 1962. According to Yokoi's lunar calendar, it was 1963.
2. Yokoi's wife, here, paraphrased Yokoi's story by using the following passage from the Emperor Hirohito's surrender address to the Japanese people which was broadcast at noon on 15 August 1945, 'enduring the unendurable, forbearing the unforbearable, We would like to make peace for the sake of myriads of generations to come . . .'. In fact, this seems to be the part which, presumably through an inaccurate translation, raised doubt on the side of the Allies whether or not the emperor pledged revenge in the future.
3. The typhoon Karen of 11–12 November 1962. According to Yokoi's lunar calendar, it was in 1963.
4. Yokoi said in Chapter 8 that the stars like Orion and the Southern Cross told him the season. He seemed to have found the Southern Cross appearing just above the horizon on Guam in early April confusing it with the torchlight of US patrols. Although Orion was seen on the zenith in December, Yokoi did not seem to have paid attention to the stars later in his life on Guam.
5. Indicating internal bleeding, with which he seemed to have lost a huge amount of blood.
6. Shōshinge, literally, 'verses' (gāthā in Sanskrit) of 'right faith' (shōshin) composed in Chinese by a Japanese monk, Shinran 1173–1262, consisting of 120 verses, each verse consisting of seven syllables.
7. The concise version of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra (book of transcendental wisdom) in Chinese translation by Chen Xuan Zhuang (Master of Tripitaka) 602–664, consisting of 262 syllables.
8. After Yokoi's discovery, Yokoi was medically found to have had a low level but balanced nutrition, although he appeared to be anaemic, presumably a result of his salt-free diet.

9. Yokoi did not know the proper way to slaughter a cow, as the Japanese used to eat no beef, perhaps partly for religious reasons related to Buddhism.
10. 'The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited island on the Coast of AMERICA, near the Mouth of the Great River OROONOQUE; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. WITH An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by PYRATES. Written by Himself.' was first published in 1719. Daniel Defoe was inspired by the real experience of Alexander Selkirk (Selcraig), a Scotsman, 1676–1721, who survived on an island of the Juan Fernández archipelago, off Chile, from 1704 to 1709.

### Chapter 15: Factors in My Survival

1. A Japanese signals officer, Tomio Yamamoto, was similarly transferred from Manchuria to Guam in 1944 and survived in the jungle for a year after the US invasion of the island. When the Americans captured him, he was suffering from malaria. Ulrich Straus, *The Anguish of Surrender*, The University of Washington Press, 2004, p. 63.

### Chapter 16: 'Discovery' No One Shall Remain Alive to Incur the Shame of Becoming a Prisoner of War (24 January 1972)

1. Seven intercalary months were necessary to be inserted every nineteen years. He adjusted his calendar a bit by observing the growth of fruits and nuts on this tropical island.
2. He was Jesus M. Duenas, a farmer of Talofofu village. His brother by marriage, Manuel T. De Gracia and he were on their way to set shrimp traps in the same river as Yokoi was intending to. The area was commonly known as 'Biscocho'. Duenas had a hunting gun, because there were wild oxen, deer, pigs and large snakes. They happened to see some foxtail grasses swaying without any wind. Assuming that a child from their village was wandering astray there, they went to rescue him.
3. There was only Manuel T. De Gracia. Yokoi was apparently shocked and confused.
4. There were only two adults. Yokoi was confusing things with the later situation in their house.
5. They were Japanese soldiers captured on 21 May 1960 near the River Talofofu.
6. It was a piece of pancake.
7. There were only Duenas and De Gracia with Yokoi, and only Duenas had a hunting gun. It should be noted here that Yokoi was in utter confusion due to shock.

8. It was a cup of coffee.
9. It was beef.
10. It was mackerel.
11. It was a jeep.
12. Mr Roman L. G. Quinata.
13. Lieutenant Mariano C. Cruz of the US Army; J. S. A. Benavente and F. L. Tenorio of the Guam Police.
14. In fact, the second-generation Japanese woman in a pure white dress was most likely to have been Mrs Kimiko Murphy, a nurse at Guam Memorial Hospital.
15. Presumably, Mr Nobuaki Kyomen of the Tokyu Express Company which ran the Tokyu Hotel on Guam.
16. They joined Yokoi in the Police Headquarters in Agana. Honorary Consul James Shintaku confirmed Yokoi's name, place of birth, rank, etc.
17. The acronym of *Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai*, 'Japanese Broadcasting Corporation'.
18. The fear of being experimented upon was made explicit to Chūnichi Newspaper, 'Kaisō Yokoi Shōichi' No. 1, 19 June 1972. He did not know of Japanese medical and biochemical experiments on living human beings in Unit 731 in Manchuria, Unit 1644 in Nanking, etc. He believed that things like this were normal when captured by the enemy.
19. Yokoi did not know either the Japanese practice of machine-gunning captured Chinese into holes which the latter had been forced to dig, or the later Nazi practice of doing the same to the Jews and others on their eastern front before the Wannsee decision to use gas chambers and crematoria. Yokoi simply believed that the fate of being shot happened normally when captured by the enemy.
20. She was Mrs Kimiko Murphy of Guam Memorial Hospital.
21. Private First Class Minagawa and Sergeant Itō were separated from Yokoi in September 1945 and captured on 21 May 1960 near where Yokoi was later discovered.
22. The fear of court-martial proceedings was made explicit to Mainichi Newspaper, 'Kiseki-no Shūhen' No. 6, 8 February 1972; Chūnichi Newspaper, 'Kaisō Yokoi Shōichi' No. 2, 20 June 1972, underlying the powerful spell over Yokoi's mind of Code 2, Article 8 of the Codes of Conduct in Battle of 8 January 1941, 'No one shall remain alive to incur the shame of becoming a prisoner of war', over Yokoi.

## **Chapter 17: Epilogue**

1. It actually seems to mean 'between' something, for example, hills.
2. Translation of the title of the Japanese edition.

## Afterwards

1. In this biography (Afterwards 1–3), as distinct from the translation of his autobiography (Chapters 1–16), he is referred to by his first name, Shō-ichi (literally translated ‘manor first’). In the Japanese army nobody was addressed by his first name even by his close friends.
2. A Special Group of Correspondents of *Asahi Newspaper*, *28 Years in the Guam Jungle*, Japan Publication Inc. San Francisco, 1972, p. 13 (p. 30 in the Japanese edition).
3. *Chunichi Newspaper*, ‘Kaisō, Yokoi Shō-ichi’, No. 15, 3 July 1972.
4. *Asahi Newspaper* Correspondents, op. cit. p. 13 (p. 30).
5. *Tokyo Newspaper*, 2 February 1972.
6. *Chunichi Newspaper*, ‘Kaisō Yokoi Shō-ichi’ No. 1, 19 June 1972.
7. *Asahi Newspaper* Correspondents, op. cit., p. 56 (reconstructed by the present author from the original Japanese edition, p. 99).
8. *Mainichi Newspaper*, 3 February 1972.
9. *Asahi Newspaper* Correspondents, op. cit., pp. 110–111 (p. 188 in the Japanese edition); *Mainichi Newspaper*, 3 February 1972; *The Times*, 3 February 1972, p. 6 by Michael Hornsby.
10. *Chunichi Newspaper*, ‘Kaisō’ No. 2, 20 June 1972.
11. *Chunichi Newspaper*, op. cit., No. 2, 20 June 1972.
12. *Chunichi Newspaper*, op. cit., No. 2, 20 June 1972.
13. *Asahi Newspaper* Correspondents, op. cit., p. 106 (p. 181).
14. *Mainichi Newspaper*, 1 February 1972. Italics in brackets are those of the present author.
15. *Gunjin Chokuyū*, sometimes translated as ‘Imperial Precepts’.
16. *Mainichi Newspaper*, 2 February 1972.
17. *Tokyo Newspaper*, 27 January 1972.
18. A copy of Shō-ichi Yokoi’s medical record at the National Tokyo First Hospital kept by his wife. The data in this paragraph are taken from the record, inferences are those of the present author.
19. A vitamin deficiency disease caused by lack of niacin (B3) and proteins containing the essential amino acid tryptophan.
20. Perhaps, the combination of the lack of physical exercise and the lack of sunshine in the underground shelter might have caused his porous bones.
21. His stomach ulcers might have been caused by the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*. It occurs in the majority of middle-aged people and causes progressive gastritis and even cancer.
22. Kawashima, M, *Kaettekita Tainanjin Nihonbei* (The Return of A Taiwanese Soldier of Japan), Bungei Shunju, Shinsho 308, Tokyo, 2003, p. 147.
23. *The New York Times*, 26 April 1972, p. 3, with a photograph of the scene.
24. *Chunichi Newspaper*, ‘Kaisō Yokoi Shō-ichi’, No. 18, 7 July 1972.
25. The Japanese word, ‘kami’ for ‘God’ has a high pitch on the first syllable,

- whereas that for 'paper' has flat pitches on both syllables. The 'God' one is likely to be a loan word from Ainu, 'kamui'.
26. The Japanese original reads: Nankai-no waga tomoyo, ware hitori kaerite, Kyō-otome-wo mukaete, kokoro kurushiki. Ikutoseka nozomimatsu kyō-no yokihi, Atsuta-no-miya, Yume-ni mi, kokoro-ni omou kyō kono sugata, Fubo-no boseki-ni sasage-matsuran.
  27. Cf. *Mainichi Newspaper*, 10 March 1972, p. 6, a report a year before their honeymoon.
  28. *Mainichi Newspaper*, 25 March 1972.
  29. *Asabi Newspaper Correspondents, 28 Years in the Guam Jungle*, p. 105 (p. 179 in the Japanese edition).
  30. By 24 April 1972, such private gifts amounted to 24,096,640 Yen (78,315 US Dollars). *Mainichi Newspaper*, Evening ed. 26 April 1972.
  31. Onkyū Hō (Statute of 1923, No. 48). The Act is still in force with a number of subsequent amendments.
  32. Chief of the (Repatriation) Assistance Bureau.
  33. *Asabi Newspaper Correspondents*, op. cit., p. 62 (p.109). Adjusted by the present author.
  34. Kawasaki, M, op. cit., pp. 83–5.
  35. *Ibid*, pp. 186–7.
  36. When Shō-ichi was discovered on 24 January 1972, he said he was in the fifty-eighth *calendar* year in his life, in accordance with Japan's pre-1945 custom. This was correct. He was fifty-six years old, but certainly in the fifty-eighth *calendar* year in his life. When one is born, he is already in the first *calendar* year in his life. On the next new year day, he is already in the second *calendar* year even before his birthday.
  37. *The Official Gazette*, The Elections of Members of the House of Councilors, Nationwide Constituency, Polling Date 7 July 1974.
  38. *Asabi Newspaper*, 9 July 1974, p. 15.
  39. *The Official Gazette*, op. cit.
  40. *Asabi Newspaper*, 9 July 1974, p. 15.
  41. *The Official Gazette*.
  42. *The Official Gazette*, "Toyoashihara-no Chiiho Aki-no Mizuho-no Kuni".
  43. Source: The Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (Japan), 2002.
  44. *Ibid*.
  45. *Asabi Newspaper*, 9 July 1974, Evening Edition, reporting on the announcement of the Central Electoral Commission, excluding votes from parts of Mie Prefecture.
  46. *Asabi Newspaper*, 9 July 1974, p. 15.
  47. *Ibid*.
  48. *Ikebana Obara*, February 1983, No. 387, pp. 13–18, some errors reconfirmed by Mihoko.
  49. *Ikebana Obara*, February 1983, No. 387, pp. 16–7.
  50. The aboriginal inhabitants of the Japanese islands before the third

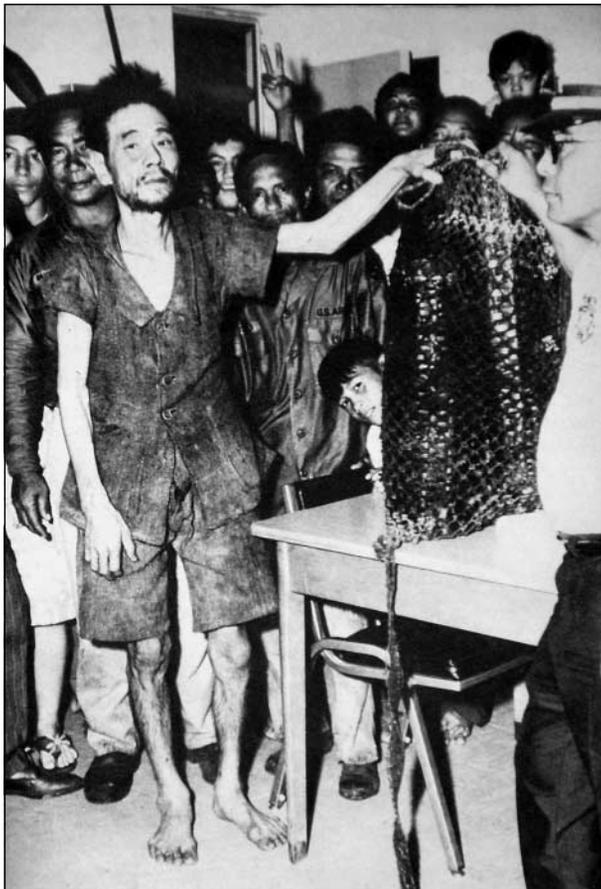
- century BC, still surviving in small numbers in Hokkaido. They also inhabited Sakhalin and the Kurils before the Soviet invasion in September 1945.
51. *Ikebana Obara*, op. cit., p. 16.
  52. *Ikebana Obara*, op. cit., p. 18.
  53. According to Defence Agency, Military History Series, Vol. 6, op. cit., p. 605, the Japanese garrison on Guam was 20,810 strong. The same source cited US marines' sources, which show that 18,377 Japanese were found dead and 1,250 were taken prisoners of war as of 15 August 1945, leaving 1,183 unaccounted for. Out of 20,810, 19,560 were either dead or unaccounted for.
  54. *Asahi Newspaper Correspondents*, op. cit., *Asahi Newspaper*, 1972, pp. 106–107 (p. 181 in the Japanese edition).
  55. Statute of 1908, No. 46, repealed by the Cabinet Order of 1947, No. 52, as the new Constitution came into force on 3 May 1947, declaring, 'land, sea and air forces as well as any other war potential, shall never be maintained' (Article 9).
  56. *Chunichi Newspaper*, 'Kaisō Yokoi Shō-ichi', No. 2, 20 June 1972.
  57. *The New York Times*, 26 April 1972, p. 3.
  58. *Asahi Newspaper Correspondents*, op. cit., p. 13 (p. 30).
  59. The well-informed Western observers of Japan just before 1868 invariably recorded that the lower class people in Japan looked perfectly satisfied, reasonably clean and happy, e.g. the first US consul in Japan, Townsend Harris, (Cosenza, M. E., ed., *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*, 1930); the contemporary British consul in Japan, Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Japan*, London, 1863.
  60. *New Scientist*, 2 April 2005, p. 8.
  61. Japan Rail's Tōkai Hospital in Nagoya diagnosed it to be Parkinson's disease. Mrs Higuchi suggested that it might have been Guam's local disease called *lytico-bodig*, which caused symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease. The present author is unable to ascertain which is correct.
  62. *Asahi Newspaper*, 10 May 1991, p. 30.
  63. *Asahi Newspaper Correspondents*, op. cit. pp. 83–4 (p. 145 in the Japanese edition) (28 January 1972).
  64. Article 1 of the 1946 Constitution of Japan reads, 'The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power.'
  65. *Asahi Newspaper*, 10 May 1991, p. 30.
  66. 'Kazunaranu minishi aredomo kyō konobi, tada arigataku misono ayumamu.'
  67. According to Defence Agency, Military History Series, Vol. 6, op. cit., p. 605, the Japanese garrison on Guam was 20,810 strong, after 1,657 had been killed on their way to Guam. The same source cited US marines'

*Private Yokoi's War and Life on Guam, 1944–1972*

sources, which show that 18,377 Japanese were found dead and 1,250 were taken prisoners of war as of 15 August 1945, leaving 1,183 unaccounted for. Out of 20,810, 19,560 were either dead or unaccounted for.



Yokoi, Private First Class, photographed in uniform shortly after being conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army in 1941 prior to his departure for Manchuria.



Yokoi photographed on his 'discovery' on Guam, January 1972, wearing his hand-made clothing and holding a hand-made net bag.



The surrounding area concealing the entrance to Yokoi's tunnel, January 1972.

*All photographs, courtesy Kensuke Haga*

4



Guam jungle

5



Mt Lam Lam

6



Hibiscus

7



Mango and avocado pear trees

8



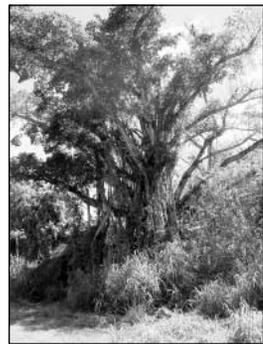
Breadfruits

9



Cycad or Federico

10



Banyan or Tao Taomona

11



Pandanus (showing roots)

12



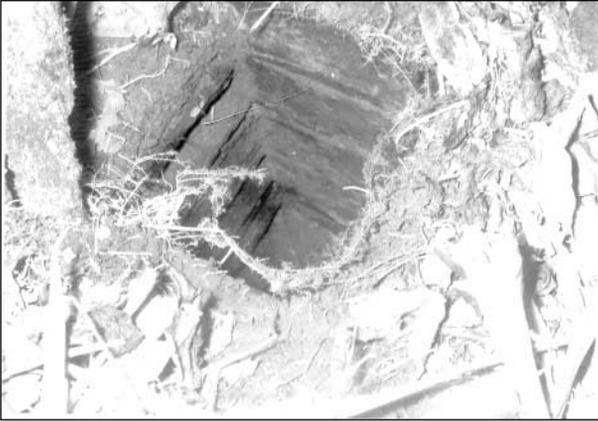
Pandanus fruit



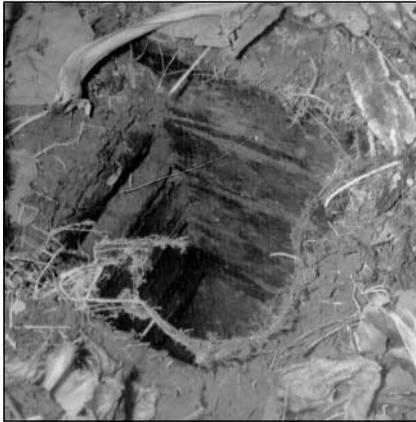
Yoko's loom and calligraphy.



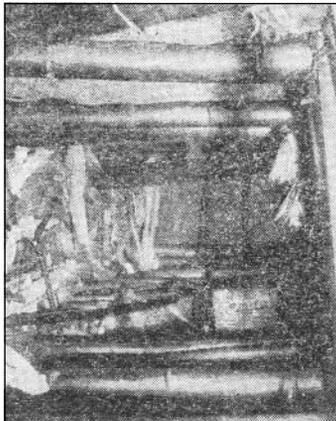
A variety of Yokoi's utensils, baskets, cord wicks, ropes and assorted tools on display shortly after his discovery. Photo: Courtesy of *Chunichi Shimbun*.



Close-up of entrance shaft to hole No.1.



Close-up of entrance shaft to hole No.2.



Hole interior. Courtesy of *Mainichi Shimbun*.



Eel trap replica made by Yokoi on his return to Japan. (Original retained in Guam.)



Replica loom made by Yokoi in hospital in Tokyo in 1972 with Yokoi demonstrating its use.



Yokoi the potter. Courtesy of Ikebana Obana, February 1983, No. 387



Yokoi and his wife admiring the cherry blossom in later life.