

HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO. 490

PLACE: TOKYO

DIVISION OF ORIGIN: MORALE

DATE : 27 Nov 1945

SUBJECT: Popular Morale in the Tonari Gumi System.

Personnel interrogated and background of each:

Mr. Miwa, Umesaburo, head of Chonai Kai of Fujisawa City, is independently wealthy. He graduated from the Agriculture school of the Imperial University in 1934. Owned and worked in firms of various types.

Where interviewed: Room 155, Meiji Bldg., Tokyo.

Interrogator: Captain M. Kleiman and Mr. Truman.

Interpreter: Lt. McCoy.

Allied Officers Present: None.

SUMMARY:

1. Miwa is a graduate of the Imperial University.
2. Respondent considers that Tonari Gumi system should be used for the incubation of democratic ideas.
3. Miwa has devoted 6 years to the Tonari Gumi System.
4. Miwa feels that GHQ should avail itself of Tonari Gumi facilities in their educational work.
5. Tonari Gumi system organized for rationing and distribution of food.
6. I. R. A. A. was charged with function of using Tonari Gumi for spiritual indoctrination.
7. Tonari Gumi system also used to supply labor.
8. Tonari Gumi meetings were the only assemblies permitted by government during the war.



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The following code will be used through the report:

T--Mr. Truman.
M--Mr. Miwa.
K--Capt, Kleiman

REPORT

Mr. Miwa stated that he is one of the few educated people who have given any considerable time to the Tonari Gumi system and feels that his six (6) years experience with them entitles him to speak with authority on their functions. He stated that the associations had frequently been studied by Government officials, but only superficially since their investigations were motivated purely by a sense of duty.

- M. I am very glad of an opportunity to explain the Tonari Gumi system because I think they are good and possibly will be of some value for the future. In this connection, I think Gen. MacArthur's method of information and education are weak and that they will take too long to have any important effect. I believe that the occupation forces should work through the Tonari Gumi and other associations close to the people for indoctrination and propaganda.
- T. How would you use them?
- M. Fujisawa, my city, is a very good example of the Tonari Gumi problem, because it is of medium size, surrounded by farm land. It is near Tokyo and contains many educated people. I should say that the method used by GHQ is not wrong, that is, working from the Government down to the people, but I believe General MacArthur should have both. For instance, if people close to the bottom send reports to General MacArthur they are shelved or modified as they go up the line. If he had direct contact with the Tonari Gumi a more accurate picture of conditions could be had.
- T. You stated that the Tonari Gumi should be used for indoctrination. Just what do you mean by that term?
- M. I am not prepared now to give a complete outline of my ideas, but would prefer to prepare them in detail and submit them at a later date. I consider that my present position is a very difficult one because our city is a mixture of intelligents, workers, etc., and is considered a very difficult area. I liked the idea of my job but I had to consider the ideas of all these different sorts of people in making decisions. About sixty (60) percent of my ideas were accepted. The central focus of the Tonari Gumi is and has been, food rationing, which was the reason for their creation. If they are to live they will have to continue to perform this function if they are to retain the interest of the members. It is being proposed, however, that their name be changed to the equivalent of cooperative neighborhood association. The significance being cooperation in the distribution of food. The Tonari Gumi were started in 1938 with the rationing of charcoal. They began to ration rice in 1939. They were used by the Government in order that the Government rules and orders might be obeyed to the last man. Accordingly to the Government's rules the Tonari Gumi could not operate through simple elective procedures or by mere majority vote. The decisions had to be unanimous.
- K. When did food rationing begin and how big was the rice ration in 1942?
- M. I suggest that at present I confine myself to general statements and avoid detailed figures since I do not have these with me and my recollection of them might be very inaccurate.

(At this point Mr. Miwa presented us with a pamphlet on the organization and procedure to be followed by Tonari Gumi in cities of the size of Fujisawa. This document was handed down by the Government through the Prefectural Government).

- M. The true name of the association is Rhi Po Han, but Tonari Gumi is the one which is popularly used. I was head of one of the Chonai Kai in Fujisawa city. These Chonai Kai tie into the Government at the city level. (Mr. Miwa drew the equivalent of the attached organization chart.)
- T. Was your experience limited to Fujisawa city?
- M. I was head of one of the Chonai Kai in Fujisawa city, also in Kanagawa Prefecture I was directed to make a study on an informal basis of all the Tonari Gumi in the Prefecture. There were very delicate relations between the Tonari Gumi, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, and the Home Office.
- T. What were those relations?
- M. The system was organized by the Home Office. Frankly for food distribution alone. In 1943 the Government decided that the I.R.A.A. should use the same system for spiritual indoctrination and spiritual cooperation. This was fine on paper but the Home Office control of food, which was practically military control, was the dominant feature, and because of that control the Tonari Gumi work was not spiritual, despite the I.R.A.A. The I.R.A.A. even changed some of the names of the organizations, but that made no difference.
- T. Did you want more effective use of the Tonari Gumi by the I.R.A.A.?
- M. It was a good idea but it was impossible because all power was held by the Government.
- T. What benefits would you have expected from greater I.R.A.A. participation?
- M. It might have been possible to establish a democratic system in that the opinions of the people would have reached the top.
- T. What powers did the Tonari Gumi have outside of the distribution of rations?
- M. When there was insufficient food unanimous agreement on the system of distribution was decided upon by the Tonari Gumi.
- T. Were only ration problems dealt with?
- M. No, they also supplied labor for some special projects as required by the Government, but the procedure for handling this also required unanimous agreement. The system gradually broke down because of the many problems and of this requirement for unanimity, and more and more power went to the heads of the Tonari Gumi, the Chonai Kai etc., as rationing became more difficult. Actually it turned into a military system.
- T. When did this happen?
- M. Gradually as the war progressed. Therefore success depended entirely on the head men of the various organizations. Consequently there is much dissenting opinion as to the merits of this system, but essentially, I believe, it is a good organization.

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- T. What sort of things would some of the head men do which threw the system into disrepute?
- M. There are two (2) things a head man can do. First, he can set up his own system of food distribution so that it is apparent to all that it is impossible for him to cheat. Also one great fault of the Japanese people is that while they have varying opinions on a given problem when they are talking informally among themselves, when they get in a formal group they are apt to be quiet and if one outspoken individual states his opinion they will not express opposition even when they feel it. If the head man bases his actions on this one expressed opinion, the next thing you get is whispering, grumbling, and rumors. It is up to the head man, therefore, to realize that this situation exists and not to take the decision of any single meeting, but to know the opinions and the rumors and work with the system in the fairest way possible. I think the majority of the Tonari Gumi had trouble because their heads were poor or dishonest.
- T. You spoke awhile ago of the fact that the Tonari Gumi were expected to enforce the rules of the Government. What kind of rules were those?
- M. The laws came right down the line to the individual from the National Government to the Prefectural Government, to the City Government and to the neighborhood associations. On paper the theory is that the opinion also works from the individual to the National Government, route for individual opinion and the opinion of the Government should follow the same route. The idea was that the head of each unit would report the peoples' opinions to the next higher point. When we had an assembly of the leaders of the Chonai Kai we found there was too little time for this process and the only transfer was a general report of conditions. Thus great responsibility was placed on the individual head man and the information was vague. On the reverse route the system was more efficient because you had only one man's opinion going down the chain and that became controlling. Finally the system of electing representatives for meetings at higher echelon broke down and the higher officials took to selecting the lower representatives who were to assemble for meetings. (At this point Mr. Miwa gave us two (2) documents which he had prepared for his own Tonari Gumi, outlining the rules of admission, the organization and procedural rules).
- T. What kind of rules were those which came down the chain?
- M. Two (2) examples. First the rules and regulations regarding air raid shelters. Second, labor regulations. (Interpreter's note: he insists that all Governmental laws came down this way although I don't quite see how this is possible.) One bottle neck was the Chonai Kai Cho, who had the whole burden of adjusting these laws to local conditions, which burden became impossible. They came down to us from the City Government like machine gun bullets. Thus these were not properly worked out on the communal basis because there was not time. (At this point Mr. Miwa presented us with a handbook prepared by the I.R.A.A. for all heads, Tonari Gumi, and Chonai Kai).
- T. As I understand it, during the war the Government looked with disfavor upon public meetings. Were they not concerned about the Tonari Gumi Meetings?
- M. Before the system was set up they did fear assemblies, but one reason for establishing the organization was to abolish all the others. This one was controlled by food rationing, and all the others were illegal. For instance, at one time I helped to organize a group of commuters and we even put out a magazine, but this was abolished when the Tonari Gumi system was set up.

T. Do you think it was a good idea to eliminate all other organizations?

M. No, it was not a good thing, but the Tonari Gumi are essentially a good system, if a good man is running them all well and good, but the strength of any one man is limited. It was the best way to work with opinion and that is why I took the job. It was the best way available.

M. (Without questioning) Recently five (5) Chonai Kai Chiefs from six (6) major cities in the Kanagawa prefecture had a morning meeting with the prefectural officials. The whole time was taken up by lectures from the prefectural people and hardly any opinions were aired by leaders of Chonai Kai. Afterwards I called an assembly of these men and they decided on a system of meeting in different cities on their own and suggested that the prefectural officials be represented if they cared to. In Fujisawa I used similar meetings for smaller groups. The system is much better when small groups meet in that way. (At this point, Mr. Miwa gave us a news paper report of one such meeting and a schedule for the Chonai Kai meetings which he organized.)

T. Can you give me an idea of the subjects covered by this schedule?

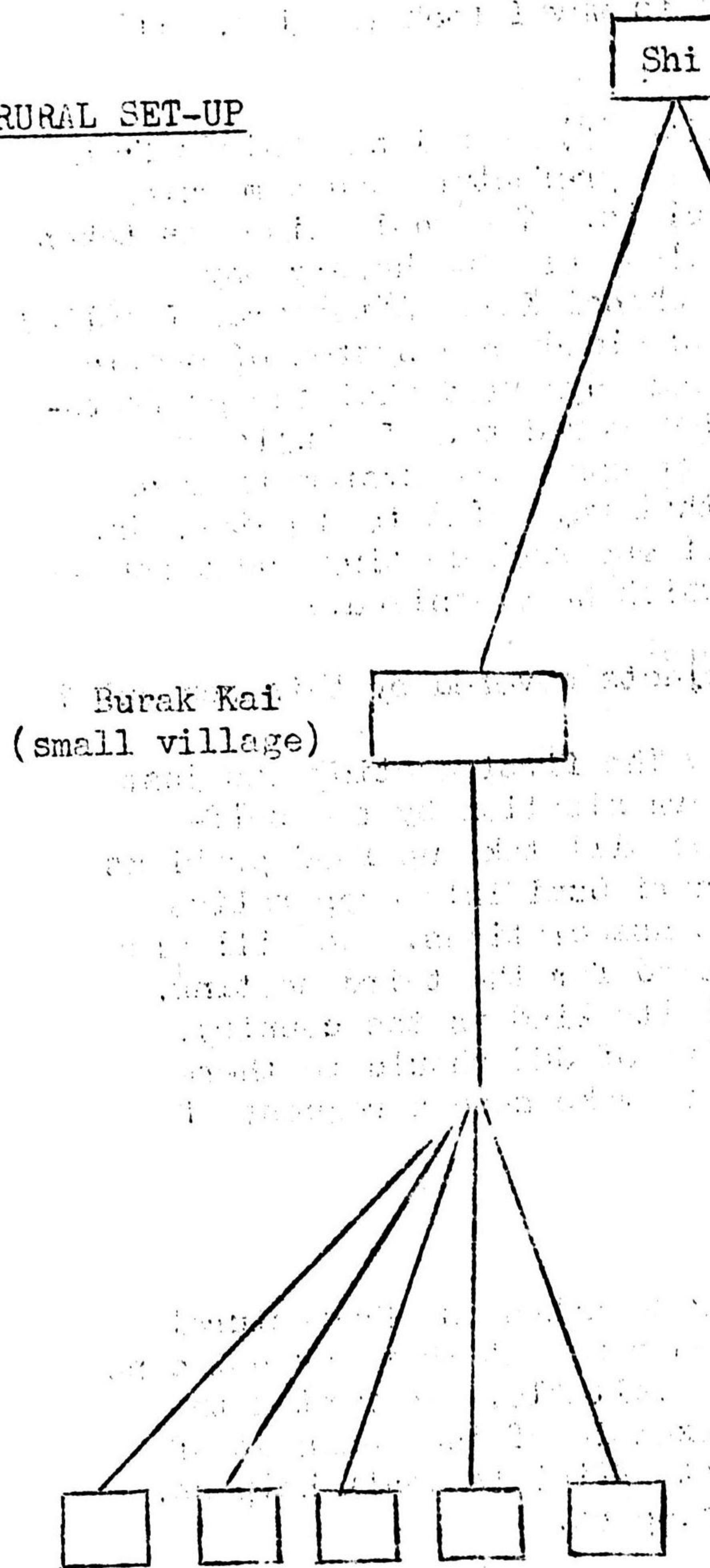
M. We have only met once in Fujisawa. The first meeting was just for the purpose of setting up the organization by the self-governing groups. In the second, we will take up food problems and the problem of changing the Tonari Gumi into cooperative associations rather than Government associations. We will also decide on the problems to be scheduled for the third meeting. I believe this is the only setup of its kind in the country. I feel strongly that a representative of GHQ should be there to observe our meeting and we hope to make such a request of GHQ.

T. Whom have you contacted at GHQ?

M. No one as yet. At our first meeting we asked the Prefectural authorities to bring a good shorthand man, but that was not done so no good record of the meeting is available. We wanted the record to show to GHQ. This is an example of the weakness of the old system, as our own Government officials won't help us. That is why we want GHQ's help and support.

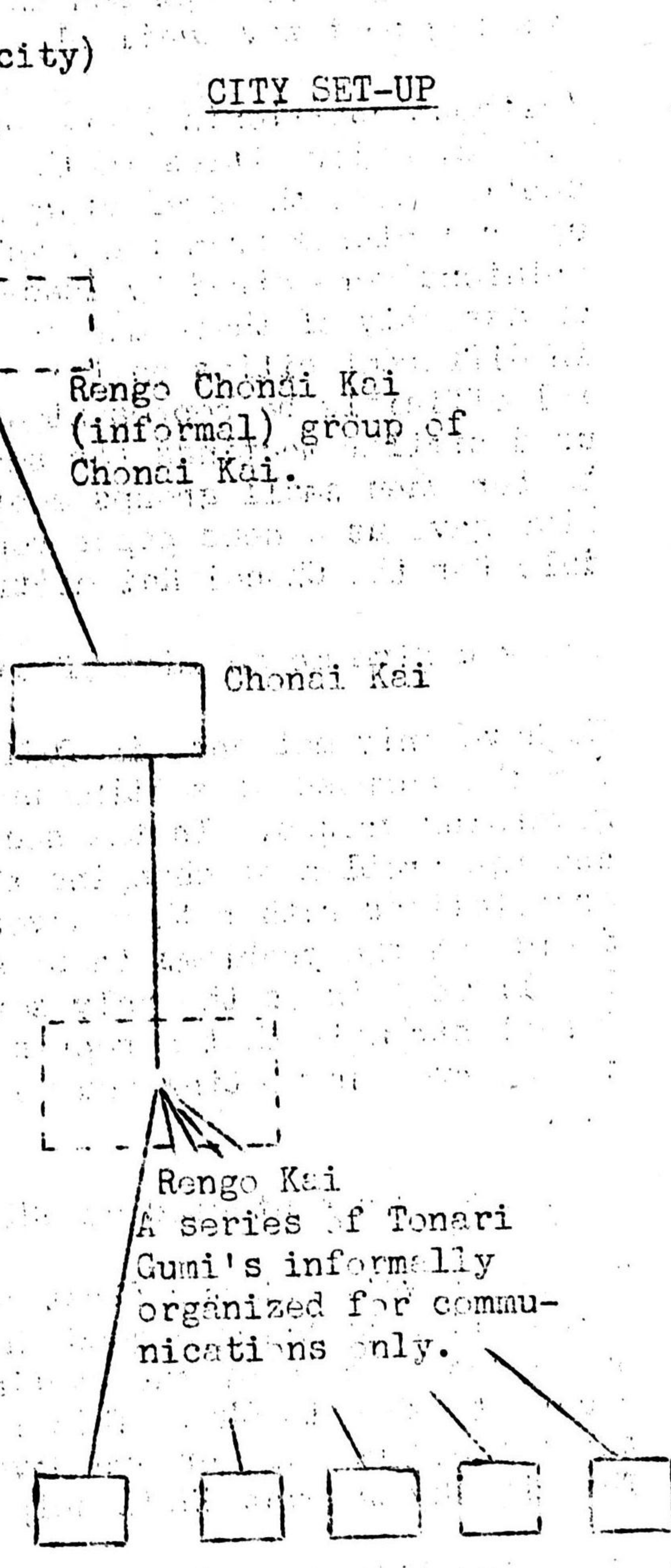
NOTE: It being 1130, Mr. Miwa was asked if he could return at a later date and he agreed to resume our discussion on Monday, December 3rd, at 9:00 A. M.

RURAL SET-UP



(Each of the 5 boxes immediately above represents a Tonari Gumi¹.)

CITY SET-UP



(Each of the 5 boxes immediately above represents a Tonari Gumi.)

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SECOND INTERVIEW. 4 December 1945.

SUMMARY:

1. Discussions in Tonari Gumi meetings were confined to food. Because of suppression and fear and because the Tonari Gumi was not a close association, real thoughts about the war were not expressed in the meetings.
2. Even though ill-informed, people did not think possible a victory over America. The most expected was an increase in the holdings in Asia, holdings on to what had been taken. When this was taken from them, they knew they could not win.
3. The morale decline was gradual after Guadalcanal, precipitous in the spring of 1945. Even so, people realized they could not win but could not use the word "defeat" Death was preferable.
4. Bombing proved to people that they had been misled. But such criticism as was expressed occurred only between two people at a time. Never in a group of three or more.
5. Not more than 5% of the Japanese really know what has been going on. These are found in all classes. The rest are fools, and until their number is reduced, no democracy in Japan is possible.
6. No revolt would have come from the people, even if the war had continued indefinitely.
7. I.R.A.A. propaganda attempts through the Tonari Gumi were futile.

The following code will be used through the report:

K - Captain Kleiman

KI - Mr. Kerr

T - Mr. Truman

M - Mr. Miwa.

REPORT

This is the second interview with Mr. Miwa. The first was held on the 27th of November.

Before the interrogation began, the interpreter showed Mr. Miwa a copy of the organization chart prepared following the first interview. Mr. Miwa stated that this change was entirely satisfactory. He suggested it should be noted that the number of Tonari Gumi under each Chonai Kai might be considerably more than shown in the plan. His position in Fujisawa involved supervision of 66 Tonari Gumi. He also explained that the reason for both Chonai Kai and the BurakKai being under one Shi is that in Fujisawa and similar cities the city limits would include both towns (Chonai Kai) and rural villages (burak Kai).

- T. Can you tell us the kinds of things which were discussed in the Tonari Gumi meetings with which you were familiar, both matters on the formal agenda and informal discussions?
- M. (Mr. Miwa drew a chart showing the relation among the National Government, the Ken, city, Chonai Kai and the Tonari Gumi. He pointed to this structure at various points in the discussion). Communication down this line worked very well, but there should have been some points in the discussion.) Communication down this

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line worked very well, but there should have been some current of information in the reverse direction. It is very like the Japanese people not to take any initiative in matters of this sort, when no arrangements are specifically made for it, so they just talked about food and rationing. They did not let out their own thoughts, but just talked of superficial things.

T. I wonder if you can tell us what changes took place in people's feelings during the war--feelings toward the war, government, themselves.

M. Japanese people are not sufficiently educated. They are very foolish (baka). They were very compliant with any orders issued from above. This is the way they were in the early part of the war.

T. How did they feel about the war in the early period?

M. They did not want it and when it happened they thought it was bad.

T. Was there any changes with the victories which occurred in 1942?

M. The Japanese people are fools (baka). They are without knowledge and without education. They did not feel that they could make any adequate judgment on the war. During the first half year they felt there was some chance of accomplishing something but no Japanese expected to be able to go so far as to occupy any portion of the United States. They thought they might possibly enlarge their holdings in Asia. They felt there was no chance of winning over such powerful countries as the U.S. and Great Britain. They did not dare express an opinion because they simply made the best of things.

T. What were the circumstances of the change after the first half year.

M. Before the war there were hardly any who thought that a complete victory might be achieved. They thought things would go so far toward war and then would clear up. At the start a few thought that Japan might win the victory. The down-swing however, came as early as Guadalcanal. They said to themselves: "What can a country do which has to depend on others even for scrap iron?" They had enough knowledge of Guadalcanal to understand what it meant, but they thought: "If we can just hold on to what is left and make peace then things would be all right". (He indicated that this attitude "If we can just hold on to what is left" continued throughout the war with each setback, at Saipan, in the Philippines, and Okinawa). There was no definite time when a change came, but it was gradual.

T. There were no marked changes at any time?

M. It was entirely gradual throughout. (At this point Mr. Miwa drew a curve which he described as showing the confidence of the Japanese people

Guadalcanal

Late Spring 1945



In the late Spring of this year we were all told that we were part of the Army. I myself felt that I would probably die fighting and we all felt that there would be no final surrender but an actual battle at the time of invasion in which we would all be killed. The entire population was deeply grateful to the Emperor for stopping the war. They cried out of relief because the Army people never ever suggested the possibility of surrender. The Emperor is one person to whom they remain grateful.

- T. Did bombing have no marked effect on people's feelings?
- M. It would be more accurate to say that they realized they couldn't win rather than that they would be defeated. They did not want to think in those terms. They did not know the truth at the time of the Marshalls. By the time of the Philippines they assumed that the continual contractions of Japanese holdings meant that the war was going badly. The bombing proved to them that they had been misled, but they continued hoping to hold on. They finally realized that they could hold absolutely nothing. During the raids particularly, one heard people say that "Death is better than this". This was especially true among women, but they did not want to use the word "defeat".
- T. To what extent was there grumbling and criticism among the people?
- M. They did not dare say anything of the sort. They might when there were just two of them together who knew each other well, but not if a third person was present. That is the reason the government had no word from the people as to what they were thinking.
- T. Were the police present at the Tonari Gumi meetings?
- M. No.
- T. Then why were the people afraid to express criticism?
- M. The Japanese people really haven't any notion of the democratic idea. There is a great deal of selfishness among them. If they talked this way it would become known in other Tonari Gumi and would gradually spread and the authorities would clamp down.
- KI. Were there spies present at the Tonari Gumi meetings?
- M. No. The word of such discussions would just spread. Their neighbors would call such persons unpatriotic rather than admit that they agreed with them.
- M. Can an American understand a mood like this?
- T. Frankly, it is very difficult for an American to understand the Japanese people. There were no spies among the ten Tonari Gumi families, but no one would tell his true feelings. This was not just a wartime situation. It was because they had been used to suppression for so very long. No father or mother ever said he was sad because he has lost his son in the war. They said they were glad.
- T. With whom did you yourself express your own doubts?
- M. To my friends. This kind of thing went on all the time and among the "intelligentsia" but never when more than two were present.
- KI. Is the present apparent falling into line with the American policy the same thing?
- M. The Japanese people are fools (baka) I am ashamed to use that term, but it is true.
- KI. But a very high proportion of them are literate, are they not?

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- M. Yes, they are literate. They can read and write, but that does not make them real persons. They have no sense of morality. They are interested in only getting along today. At least 95% are in that classification. Perhaps 5% are in the group which really knows something. They have something to go on, they think. This 5% will not easily love today what they hated yesterday, but if things get worse, the 95% will become hostile, or may. Today's welcome may be very different tomorrow. The only hope for the Japanese people is to increase the number represented by this 5% and to lessen the 95%. (Mr. Miwa said he had selected these percentages arbitrarily and he thought that the 5% actually overstated the proportion which he described in the above terms).
- T. You used the word "intelligentsia" a few moments ago. Can you give me an idea what you mean by that term?
- M. The middle class, not the highest, not the lowest, but the middle class. But, this 5% may be found in any class, among the rich, among the middle class, among the laboring class. They were the people who really knew what was going on before the war.
- T. What is the source of happiness at the present time among the 95%?
- M. They are happy because the war is over. In the second place, they are happy because when the Americans came they did not massacre, rape or make slaves of the people, but rather treated them with kindness. Their minds are at rest now, but it is not a stable rest.
- T. Had the war continued for some months, do you think there would have been any revolt among the people?
- M. They would have died before that.
- T. Some very prominent Japanese have told us that there was a danger of revolt. Have you any comment on this?
- M. Plenty of people had revolt in their minds, but it couldn't possibly get beyond that point.
- T. The other day we just touched on the relation of the IRAA to the Tonari Gumi system. What can you tell us about the purposes of the IRAA in working through the Tonari Gumi?
- M. They wanted to get the 95% thoroughly in line with the government's ideas. Of course, it would have been desirable to get 100%, but they really wanted this 95%. Everyone belongs to Tonari Gumi, so it was the natural device. Actually it was supposed to strengthen the upward flow of information. They even gave different names to the Tonari Gumi and Cho-nai Kai leaders when they were performing this function. But then, the government made the system its own agent and lined it up with the down-ward flow of directions, which was already too strong.
- T. What were the over-all purposes of the IRAA?
- M. At first they were trying to get everyone to help in what the government was doing. From that point of view, it was very democratic. This was at the start. They made up a big budget and asked the government for the money. But, the government reduced it drastically because they felt that if this new body had funds and had direct contact with all the people it would, in turn, become the government. Looking back, I think it would have made very little difference as it would not have been a democratic set-up.

- T. Was it your understanding that at the start there were to be changes in government policy if such policy were distasteful to those at the bottom of the hierarchy?
- M. Definitely no, because the Japanese has never used to any approximation of democracy. Theoretically, the Emperor has always been close to the people, but first the Shogunate came between them and recently the government has come in between because of the existence of this 95%. There will be no true democracy in Japan until this 95% shrinks to less than half, a process which may take 40-50 years.
- T. How did the IRAA endeavor to line up the 95% with the government plan?
- M. They just made up a lot of "do's and dont's" printed them and issued them. That was all it amounted to. The Tonari Gumi system was strictly a matter of food and rationing. They tried to put this additional responsibility on them but even the leaders immediately forgot what they were told. The feeling was that this was just the government under another name.
- T. Were there any cases of Tonari Gumi members or leaders informing on the membership?
- M. The Tonari Gumi were not a group of close associates. Both the police and officials are citizens, and as such belong to the Tonari Gumi. They would hear things that went on and so inevitably the word got into the hands of the police, but the Tonari Gumi hierarchy is the only one left in Japan and it will remain. It is nation-wide and it deals with the most primitive needs of man -- food. GHQ investigations have stated at the top of the government and have been handed down the line, and everyone at each stage has put into them what he wanted. I would like to get representatives of GHQ to go to Fujisawa and similar places and have meetings with the people.
- K. Will they talk?
- M. Maybe they will, but it will be possible to watch them and to learn by observation. If they were to use Fujisawa as an example and they found out the conditions there, they would get a good picture of conditions throughout the Empire.
- K. Your observation is that things are heaven downwards now?
- M. Yes. The natural place for democracy to grow is in the neighborhood groups. It is not a governmental set-up and would be a hot-bed for democracy, both the Tonari Gumi and the Chonai Kai. I urge you to send an investigating committee to Fujisawa, if you get something real going there the whole nation will imitate it, as Japanese are great imitators. (T pointed out to Miwa at this point that as USSBS people we had no influence upon GHQ policy and could do nothing to implement the suggestions which he was making.)
- K. Did the people in the Tonari Gumi know which persons were members of the Kempei?
- M. Yes. They always knew. When people are living so close together you can't keep a secret. They all know what everyone is doing.

The Tonari Gumi system is not wrong, but it was wrongly used. If you take the system away entirely, Japan will have no choice but to go Communist. The government used the system during the war and that was all right as a means of achieving unity du-

ring war, but now it can be used for good.

Mr. Miwa again stated that he would prepare a written report on his observations and aspirations for the Tonari Gumi system and would notify us within a week or so when it was completed. It was agreed that he should bring it in and we should hold a further conversation at that time.

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