

The Air Raid Experience in Tokushima

徳島市における空襲体験

Incendiary Bombs Dropped on Nyuta in the West of Tokushima City

— 徳島市西部入田に投下された焼夷弾 —

Yabe Yukiko 矢部 雪子

Nyuta-cho, Tokushima 徳島市入田町

The day before of Tokushima air raid there was a strange sudden sound in the house. It was the sound of gunfire (“*bari bari bari*”) and I was nearly paralysed with fear, it was a terrible sound. When I leapt out of the house there were U.S. Grumman fighter planes in the sky to the east flying in at a low altitude. I was so close that I could see the pilot’s cap (*sentoubou*) and goggles but he quickly flew away. I was safe but a little while later I was informed that the sound had been the shooting of a man weeding in the fields.

The next day –

The chairman contacted us to say “In the event we need to evacuate we will head to the bottom of the great camphor tree (*Kasuga no Okusu*) and look out for each other!” The war situation was becoming increasingly severe, a mainland invasion was threatened and we were concerned about the reconnaissance planes the previous day. At that time

we heard the air raid siren blaring (“*uuu uuu uuu...*”).

In pauses between the sirens I heard the voice of a man screaming "Retreat! Retreat!" I grabbed the two young boys next-door by the hands. The husband had been called to the front so the wife and boys were left alone at home. I wanted to protect the eldest child at the very least so we kept running with that in mind.

The alarm blared (“*zazaa~ zazaa~*”). The large branches of the great camphor shook it was an awesome sound. The roar of the B29s was deafening as they passed overhead. Then I took the two boys in my arms and lay over them as sand and pebbles fell like rain. We hurried under the great camphor. The neighbourhood had already been evacuated and everyone was gathered there.

“Sun god, moon god, I pray that Takeo’s house does not burn down!” an old woman, a tofu maker, repeatedly prayed to the heavens. At that very moment incendiary bombs were dropped one after the other before our eyes over Mt. Nanzan. The fireworks of Mt. Manzan started burning in unison. “What should we do? What should we do?” we were at our wits end. Fortunately those areas were sparsely populated. Only a couple of cabins were burnt down. The fire went out naturally on the green mountain.

From our position we could observe the intensity of the attack on Tokushima. From that distance the incendiary bombs dropped from the B29s looked like fireballs falling

from the sky, dancing and fluttering. An important town was about to be burnt to the ground. We held our breath. There was nothing we could do. It had been devastated and there was nothing we could do but watch on helplessly. Dawn broke overnight with sand was still falling from the sky. An electron incendiary bomb was embedded in the ground nearby and it gave off a nasty smell. Unexploded bombs were found one after the other in Nanzan and piled high in the town office. The main prefectural road runs in front of my house and those who had been burnt out in the air raid came past in an endless stream with only the bare necessities as they headed to stay with relatives. “War on the home front as well as on the battlefield is no good. I hope it ends soon.” and that is what I really thought.