

The Comfort Women Issue

in Sharper Focus

Tsutomu Nishioka

Japan Policy Institute

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The Comfort Women Issue in Sharper Focus

The basis of the ongoing diplomatic problem between Japan and South Korea known as “the comfort women” issue is presented in the 2014 publication entitled *The Comfort Women Issue—A Review of the Facts and Common Misunderstandings*.¹ Among the fixed perceptions refuted in the pamphlet is the misconception that “the Japanese army mobilized 200,000 Korean women as sex slaves and slaughtered many of them after the war.”

In this sequel, I will examine the factual relationship of the following points to the comfort women discussion.

1. The significance of the *Asahi Shimbun*'s August 2014 acknowledgment of misreporting, its apology and its retracting of related articles on the comfort women issue;
2. The reason why “comfort women” suddenly emerged as a diplomatic point of contention in 1992; and
3. A description of the life of actual comfort women and how it differed from that of “sex slaves.”

Part 1: The *Asahi Shimbun* Retracts Its Reports on “Comfort Women”

The *Asahi Shimbun* Acknowledges Misreporting

The *Asahi Shimbun*'s admission in August 2014 that many of its reports on the comfort women issue were not true is welcome. Unfortunately, the now-established misconception that “Japanese military forces mobilized 200,000 Korean women as sex slaves and slaughtered many of them after the war” is largely the consequence of the *Asahi Shimbun*'s now-disavowed reports on

¹ See *The Comfort Women Issue—A Review of the Facts and Common Misunderstandings*, by Tsutomu Nishioka (Japan Policy Institute, 2014). <http://www.seisaku-center.net/sites/default/files/uploaded/The%20Comfort%20Women%20Issue-03.pdf>.

this issue.² The evidence shows:

First, there are no instances in which Korean women were forcibly recruited by government authorities to become comfort women.

Throughout the 1980's, the theory that government authorities engaged in the forced abduction of comfort women was prevalent in academia and the mass media in Japan as well as South Korea. However, from 1992 onward, it was taken up as a diplomatic issue, prompting bona fide research and widespread debate to begin. As a consequence, the dominant opinion in Japan as well as among some segments of South Korean academia has become the realization that "there are no instances where Korean women were forced to become comfort women by government officials."

The 1980's theory was based on the testimony of a person named Seiji Yoshida, who said, "I conducted the forceful recruitment of comfort women like a 'slave hunt' on South Korea's Jeju Island based on orders from the Army to recruit Volunteer Corps members."³ However, in the process of the research and debate that occurred following his statements and the *Asahi Shimbun* articles, it was revealed that the allegations could not be corroborated by any other evidence or witness testimony.

A consequence of the Yoshida statements and the *Asahi Shimbun's* misreporting is that the sensational allegations in the *Asahi* articles quickly spread beyond Japan to the international community. Unfortunately, the post-1992 research and debate in Japan and the resulting reassessment that "there was no coercive recruitment by the authorities of Korean women as comfort

² Ibid., footnote 1, p. 6

³ See *Watashi no sensō hanzai: Chōsen-jin no kyōsei renkō (My War Crimes: Forceful Recruitment of Koreans)*, by Seiji Yoshida (San'ichi Shobo, 1983). Mr. Yoshida, wrote "For three years from 1942 to the end of the war, as head of a mobilization section of Yamaguchi Prefecture's Labor Dedication to the Nation Association, I conducted 'slave hunts' while engaged in the business of requisitioning Koreans."

women” was not effectively conveyed outside of Japan. Instead, the discredited theory that “comfort women were forcibly recruited by the public authorities” is still widely believed.

The spread of these misconceptions in the international community was further accelerated by a report prepared for the U.N. Human Rights Commission in 1996, known as the Coomaraswamy Report. The report condemned Japan and enumerated as evidence to support its conclusions such allegations as the Seiji Yoshida testimony that had already been investigated and discredited.

Compounding the error, since 2007 the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the European Union and the Canadian Parliament, among others, has used the Coomaraswamy report as a principal basis for their adoption of resolutions against Japan. The resolutions hold the Japanese government responsible for “its Imperial Armed Forces’ coercion of young women into sexual slavery ... through the duration of World War II.”⁴

However, an important turn of events occurred in August 2014, which further underscored the factual errors behind the international community’s misconception of the issue. The *Asahi Shimbun* announced that it had reexamined its own reporting on the comfort women issue for the years 1980 onward. Anxious to correct the record and maintain its reputation as a quality Japanese newspaper, *Asahi* retracted many of its articles on this issue and apologized for its misreporting. In the process, the newspaper admitted the credibility of Japanese academia’s theory that the factual record shows that “Japanese authorities did not coercively recruit Korean women as comfort women.”⁵ Relevant excerpts of the *Asahi Shimbun*’s explanation and apology

⁴ H. Res. 121, in the House of Representatives, U.S., July 30, 2007, p. 3; also see, among others, European Parliament Resolution B60525/2007, December 13, 2007, and Canada House of Commons Motion 291, May 21, 2008.

⁵ See *The Comfort Women Issue*, by Tsutomu Nishioka (Japan Policy Institute, 2014) for a full discussion of the background and debate that led Japanese academia to this conclusion.

are quoted below in the newspaper's Q&A format.⁶

Question: The government has explained that no documents exist that provide direct evidence for forcible taking away of women, in which the military or police abducted women like kidnappers and forced them to become comfort women. Was there in fact no forcible taking away of the women?

* * *

In 1991 and 1992, when interest was focused on the comfort women issue, The Asahi Shimbun reported that Korean comfort women had been “forcibly taken away.” In addition to introducing as one example of forcible taking away of women the testimony about “hunting comfort women” on Jeju Island made by Seiji Yoshida (explained in the next section), the Asahi also published an editorial on Jan. 12, 1992, shortly before Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa visited South Korea. With a title of “Do not avoid looking at history,” the editorial said “(comfort women) were recruited or forcibly taken away under the name of “teishintai” (volunteer corps)....

In February 1993, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan published a volume that contained the testimony of 19 former comfort women from about 40 in total. The 19 women were chosen because the group had confidence in their reliability, according to Chung Chin-sung, the chairperson of the research group affiliated with the council. Four of the women spoke of “violence by military personnel or civilians working for the military.” Many of the women said they were kidnapped after they were coaxed by sweet talk by agents, or were taken away after being fooled....

⁶ See *Kyosei-Renkō: Jiyū o ubawareta kyōseisei atta*, published in Japanese by the *Asahi Shimbun* on August 5, 2014. An English translation under the title “Forcibly taken away: Coercion that led to lost freedom existed” was published by Asahi Shimbun Digital, August 22, 2014, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASG8P3CLFG8PULPT001.html>.

Since 1993, the Asahi has tried not to use the term “forcible taking away” as much as possible....

No official documents were found that directly showed forcible taking away by the military on the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, where the people living there were made “subjects” of the Japanese Empire under Japanese colonial rule. Prostitution agents were prevalent due to the poverty and patriarchal family system. For that reason, even if the military was not directly involved, it is said it was possible to gather many women through such methods as work-related scams and human trafficking....

Ever since the Kono Statement⁷ was issued, all succeeding administrations, including the current Abe administration, have continued to abide by it. At the same time, some politicians and experts have repeatedly made the argument to the effect that the central government does not have to bear any responsibility on grounds “there was no forcible taking away.” That argument is based on the fact that no official documents of the Japanese government have been found that show the Japanese military directly taking away the comfort women....

To our readers

On the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, which were colonies of Japan, agents who worked in line with the intentions of the military were able to gather many women by fooling them with such statements as

⁷ On August 4, 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan in which he apologized for and announced the findings of a Government study on the issue of war era comfort women. Successive Japanese governments have confirmed this statement. See <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html> In June, 2014, a report on the process of the making of the Kono Statement was released by the Japanese Government. See “*The Details of Exchanges Between Japan and The republic of Korea (ROK) Regarding The Comfort Women Issue – From the Drafting of the Kono Statement to the Asian Women’s Fund*” (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 20, 2014), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000042167.pdf>

“There is good work available.” No documents have been found that show the military systematically taking away women like kid-nappers....”

The *Asahi Shimbun* Admits the “Slave Hunt” Testimony Is not True

Also in the same series of newspaper articles on the results of its own investigation into the veracity of Seiji Yoshida’s statements and other reporting, the *Asahi Shimbun* acknowledged that Mr. Yoshida’s testimony alleging “forceful taking away of women” by the authorities was a falsehood that the newspaper had published repeatedly since 1982. The *Asahi Shimbun* apologized and retracted its related articles published over the years. Relevant sections of this admission and apology are quoted below in the newspaper’s Q&A format.⁸

Question: There was a man who testified in books and meetings that he had used violence to forcibly take away women on the Korean Peninsula, which was Japan’s colony, to make them serve as comfort women during the war. The *Asahi Shimbun* ran articles about the man from the 1980’s until the early 1990’s. However, some people have pointed out that his testimony was a fabrication.

The man’s name was Seiji Yoshida. In his books and on other occasions, he said that he headed the mobilization section at the Shimonoseki branch of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Romu Hokokukai labor organization [Yamaguchi Prefecture’s “Labor Dedication to the Nation Association”] that was in control of day laborers.

⁸ See *Saishū-tō de renkō: Shōgen urazuke erarezu kyōgi to handan*, published in Japanese by the *Asahi Shimbun* on August 5, 2014. An English translation under the title “Testimony about ‘forcible taking away of women on Jeju Island’: Judged to be fabrication because supporting evidence not found” was published by *Asahi Shimbun Digital* on August 22, 2014, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/SDI201408213563.html>.

The Asahi Shimbun has run, as far as it can confirm, at least 16 articles about Yoshida. The first appeared in the Sept. 2, 1982, morning edition in the city news page published by the Osaka head office. The article was about a speech that he gave in Osaka in which he said “I ‘hunted up’ 200 young Korean women on Jeju Island.”

The reporter, 66, who wrote the article, was in the City News Section at the Osaka head office at that time.

The reporter said, “I had absolutely no doubts about the contents of his talk because it was very specific and detailed....”

In the April 30, 1992, morning edition of the Sankei Shimbun, an article raised doubts about Yoshida’s testimony based on the results of an investigation conducted by Ikuhiko Hata on Jeju. Weekly magazines also began publishing articles pointing to “Suspicion of ‘fabrication’.”

In April and May 2014, The Asahi Shimbun interviewed a total of about 40 people in their late 70s to 90s living on Jeju. However, no evidence was obtained that supported the writing by Yoshida about forcible taking away.

In a town on the northwestern part of the island where Yoshida claimed to have taken away several dozens of women working at a plant making dried fish, there was only one factory in the village that handled fish. The son of the local man who was involved in factory management, now deceased, said, “Only canned products were made there. I never heard from my father about women workers being taken away.”

Yoshida wrote that the factory roof was “thatched.” Video images that captured conditions at that time were obtained by Norifumi Kawahara, a professor of historical geography at Ritsumeikan University who

has conducted research on the fishing industry in South Korea at that time. The images showed the roof to be made of tin and tile.

In June 1993, Kang Jeong-suk, a former researcher at the Korean Research Institute for Chongshindae, conducted research on Jeju based on the writings of Yoshida. “I heard from several elderly people at each of the locations I visited, but I did not come across any testimony that matched the writings,” Kang said.

Yoshida wrote in his book he went to Jeju in May 1943 based on a mobilization order from the Western District Army. He also wrote that the contents of the order were left in the diary of his wife (now deceased). However, Yoshida’s oldest son, 64, was interviewed for this special coverage, and it was learned that the wife never kept a diary. The son said Yoshida died in July 2000....

To our readers

We have made the judgment that the testimony that Yoshida forcibly took away comfort women on Jeju was a fabrication. We retract our articles on him. We were unable to uncover the falseness of his testimony at the time the articles were published. Although additional research was conducted on Jeju, we were unable to obtain any information that corroborated his testimony. Interviews with researchers have also turned up a number of contradictions regarding the core elements of his testimony.⁹

Both of the *Asahi Shimbun* articles quoted above reconfirm the fact that the views presented in my previous publication, *The Comfort Women Issue*, are the established theory in Japanese academia and journalism.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., footnote 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., footnote 1.

In addition, while the *Asahi Shimbun* retracted its articles related to Seiji Yoshida, it did not apologize for their publication in its August 5 newspaper article on the results of its investigation. The arrogance of the newspaper's posture in acknowledging the falsity of its reports without apologizing attracted abundant public criticism. As a result, the president of the *Asahi Shimbun* held a press conference on September 11, 2014, at which time he did apologize.

Part 2: Why Did Comfort Women Become a Diplomatic Issue?

In 1992, the Comfort Women Issue Emerged Suddenly in Japan-Korea Diplomacy

Observers in many countries witnessing current Japan-South Korea relations deteriorate around the comfort women issue may have the impression that this has been an unresolved problem and subject of diplomatic negotiations between the two countries throughout the postwar period. That impression would be mistaken.

The comfort women issue only became a pending bilateral issue in Japan-South Korean diplomacy in January 1992, more than 25 years after the normalization of relations between the two countries. The issue was not raised even once in the 15 years of negotiations between Japan and South Korea over normalization of relations from 1951 to 1965; nor was it a pending topic in Japan-Korea diplomacy for the subsequent 26 years through 1991.

The South Korean government first took up the comfort women issue as a diplomatic topic in 1992, soon after the 1991 launch of the *Asahi Shimbun*'s campaign alleging coercive recruitment of comfort women. In the same year, former comfort women supported by Japanese activists and lawyers filed suit against the Japanese government, demanding postwar reparations. However, after the Kono Statement was issued in 1993, the South Korean

government again did not raise the comfort women issue in its diplomacy. Consequently, for the following 18 years the issue was not a diplomatic problem between Japan and South Korea. It again became a diplomatic matter and remains so today because the South Korean Constitutional Court, in the appeal of a case brought by South Korean activist groups, handed down a judgment in 2011, saying, “It is unconstitutional for the South Korean government not to promote diplomacy to seek reparations for the former comfort women.”

Why did this issue emerge abruptly in 1992 as a diplomatic problem? The backdrop for the issue may be found in the malignancy of fabricated reporting by Japanese media led by the *Asahi Shimbun*, together with agitation by Japanese activists, followed by the Japanese government’s clumsy diplomacy characterized by repeated apologies without first investigating the facts. These are explained more fully below.

In South Korea No One Claimed “There Was Forceful Recruitment of Comfort Women”

First, let us begin with the perception of comfort women in South Korea before 1992.

I first went to study in South Korea in 1977. Living in a student dormitory, I was called out by South Korean students and criticized for the Takeshima Islands issue and the Japanese government’s allegedly excessive approach to North Korea. However, there was not even one South Korean student who raised the comfort women issue. There was a corresponding lack of interest by South Korean newspapers and television, which provided much anti-Japanese content in their reporting but never took up the topic of comfort women.

In 1985, a Korean movie called “Women’s Volunteer Corps—Bloody Sex” was shown in a theater on the fringes of central Seoul. Assuming it might be a violent, anti-Japanese movie, I timidly went to see it, only to find it was a

kind of pornographic movie with a comfort woman and her Korean lover as the main characters.¹¹ The movie was meant to appeal to those of degenerate taste and was full of sex scenes but had very little anti-Japanese content. It simply depicted wartime comfort women in the same category as other postwar women who sadly became private sector prostitutes for economic reasons. South Korea at the time had numerous private brothel districts and many women were engaged in prostitution, citing reasons of poverty or, more specifically, enabling their brothers to attend college.

Many of my Korean friends at the time enlisted in the army while they were at university in order to fulfill their compulsory military duty. At their farewell parties, these students, who were due to enter the military a few days later, would casually say they wanted to spend that night at a brothel “in order to become an adult” before entering the military. Many brothels were in operation near the military camps to entertain Korean soldiers during their time off. I vividly remember those scenes, and that they were so routine.

In those days I found Koreans who reminisced fondly about their experiences under Japan’s administration, though with some regret and humiliation because their country could not be independent in those years. In the late 1970’s, the center of downtown Seoul had some coffee shops that played Japanese popular songs even during the day. In those places, I remember hearing Koreans speaking fluent Japanese talk about how they enjoyed Japanese Rakugo (comic story telling) and had been moved by listening to the tapes of Japanese popular songs. Other Koreans told me personal stories, such as the one who recounted how his former Japanese high school teacher had whispered when their paths crisscrossed that “you should study economics, because the economy will be really important for Korean independence.” There was not a single person who told stories about “rounding up comfort women” or “slave hunting.”

A South Korean university professor who grew up as the son of the head of

¹¹ See *Gendai Koria* (Modern Korea), a monthly magazine, October 1985 issue.

the local hospital in South Hamgyong Province's Pukchong County, which is currently a part of North Korea, told me a story about how his father, using his position as the hospital chief, secretly helped save some Japanese women from Soviet troops in 1945. At the time, Soviet troops occupied the northern half of the Korean peninsula. His story is as follows:¹²

The commander of Soviet troops ordered the Japanese, who were detained as a group in an elementary school building, to provide them with some young women. The Japanese principal of the school, who was on good terms with the chief of the local hospital, sent a message to him asking for help. As it happened, the Soviet commander had contracted a venereal disease as a result of raping women in Manchuria and was receiving private treatment from the hospital chief in secrecy, since he would be punished if the Soviet military doctors learned of his condition.

The hospital chief took the opportunity to advise the commander that "Japanese women have a very weak sense of chastity; they will have sex with anybody, resulting in a lot of venereal disease patients. What would be safe is to use the public prostitutes and geisha girls that are under public health management." The commander, who believed the hospital head's lie, then stopped preying on ordinary Japanese women and changed his order to look for women engaged in the entertainment industry.

It is not plausible that the Korean hospital chief would have tried to protect those Japanese women if the Japanese army had forcibly turned 200,000 Korean women into sex slaves.

A Segment of the Japanese News Media Inflamed the Postwar Reparations Issue

The comfort women issue was being created in the late 1980's to early

¹² The author, Tsutomu Nishioka, obtained this testimony from Lee Myong-Yong, professor of the Sungkyunkwan University, in an interview conducted in Seoul, South Korea, in February 1992.

1990's, just as the generation who knew the truth of the matter grew older in years. At the same time, some Japanese anti-Japan activists went to South Korea and instigated litigation demanding reparations from the Japanese government. Meanwhile, the *Asahi Shimbun* and others launched a public awareness campaign built on fabrications, creating the conditions for the comfort women issue to become a major diplomatic theme between Japan and South Korea.

The August 11, 1991 edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* contained an article about “‘Korean military comfort women’ taken to the Sino-Japanese War and World War II combat zones under the name of the ‘Women’s Volunteer Corps’ and forced to engage in prostitution with Japanese military personnel.” It was reported that, “one such woman living in Seoul has since come to the attention of the ‘Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan’ (TeiTaiKyo), which has begun a hearing of her story.” The author of this article was an *Asahi Shimbun* reporter named Takashi Uemura. This article was a “scoop” that preceded similar stories in Korean newspapers about a former comfort woman named Kim Hak-sun.¹³

Prompted by this article, from the autumn of 1991 through January of 1992, the Japanese news media with the *Asahi Shimbun* at the forefront began concentrated reporting on the comfort women issue, fueling a major campaign in which it was demanded that “the Japanese government apologize to and compensate former comfort women.” In December 1991, synchronizing with Japanese private sector activists, some former comfort women filed a suit in a Japanese court demanding an apology and reparations from the Japanese government. They received enthusiastic support from Japanese activists and lawyers in the process.

The reporter Takashi Uemura had studied in South Korea and was proficient

¹³ See “First testimony by former comfort woman: No twisting of facts in article,” English translation published by Asahi Shimbun Digital, August 22, 2014, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASG8L6FQ6G8LULPT00T.html>.

in the Korean language. However, his article contained serious factual flaws which, no matter how you look at it, are of the type that cannot be attributed to accidental misunderstanding.

On August 14, 1991, immediately after the reporter Uemura wrote his first article on the issue, Ms. Kim Hak-sun held a press conference in Seoul which South Korean newspapers reported prominently. The resulting South Korean newspaper articles stated clearly regarding Ms. Kim's personal history that "she was sold for training to a *kisaeng* (Korean female entertainment) house in Pyongyang by her mother at the age of 14 because of family hardship. After finishing three years of training, Ms. Kim was taken by her *kisaeng* house 'stepfather' to northern China for what she assumed would be her first job placement, an area where 300-some Japanese troops were stationed."¹⁴

This is a very important point. Of course, even if she had originally been sold into a *kisaeng*, Ms. Kim nevertheless suffered the pain of being a comfort woman. However, the extent of involvement by Japanese military or government officials is significantly different in the case of someone forcibly taken by Japanese authorities under the name of the Women's Volunteer Corps as compared to the case of Ms. Kim, who was sold to a private prostitution business as a consequence of poverty. This point is critical to the factual examination of whether or not Ms. Kim was forcibly taken away by Japanese authorities acting under the name of the Women's Volunteer Corps. Did reporter Uemura not know this when he published his newspaper scoop four days before Ms. Kim's press conference?

This is not the only point. On December 6, 1991, in a lawsuit filed in the Tokyo District Court, Ms. Kim firmly stated, "I had been in *kisaeng* school for three years from age 14 when, at 17 years old in the spring of 1939, I was told about a place where 'if you go, you can make money....' Accompanied by my 'step-father,' I was delivered to that place in China."

This being the case, I think that the reporter, Mr. Uemura, cannot escape the

¹⁴ See The *Hankyoreh* Newspaper, August 15, 1991 issue

suspicion that he intended to conceal some of the facts. Furthermore, as the reporter whose article the *Asahi Shimbun* used most enthusiastically in launching its campaign to influence public opinion on this issue, he cannot be forgiven for committing this kind of error.

Moreover, as it turns out the reporter, Mr. Uemura, is married to the daughter of a leader of the organization “Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families,” which sued the Japanese government seeking an apology and reparations. Mr. Uemura, though an interested party through his relationship to a leader of the organization seeking a trial, wrote an article to support the court case without revealing his relationship. This is a serious problem from the standpoint of news media ethics.

Mr. Uemura’s article became a root cause for the comfort women controversy. However, as a result of my research in Seoul, I came to consider the story a fabrication and criticized Mr. Uemura by name in an article I wrote for the April 1992 issue of *Bungei Shunju*.¹⁵

At the time, many Japanese seemed to think that, if coercive recruitment like a “slave hunt” had taken place as testified by Seiji Yoshida, then there must be some reasons for the request for reparations and an apology. Yet, the testimony by Seiji Yoshida had obvious contradictions when considered from the standpoint of wartime common sense. He narrated as his own experience that “we hunted Korean women for comfort women under the name of the ‘Imperial Army Comfort Women’s Volunteer Corps’ under the

¹⁵ See “*Ianfu mondai*” to wa nan datta no ka (The Comfort Women Issue: What Exactly Was It?), by Tsutomu Nishioka, *Bungei Shunju* monthly magazine, Bungei Shunju publishing company, April 1992 issue. Also see *ibid.*, footnote 13, regarding the article on an ex-comfort woman written by the *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Takashi Uemura. The *Asahi Shimbun* in its August 5, 2014 edition published an article reporting on its investigation and failure to verify the facts of Mr. Uemura’s allegations and obstinately insisted, in the case of this article, that “there was no intentional twisting of facts.” Also see *Nikkan gokai no shin’en* (The Abyss of Japan–South Korea Misunderstanding), by Tsutomu Nishioka (Aki Shobo, 1992) and *Asahi Shimbun: Nihon-jin e no daizai* (Asahi Shimbun: Serious Crimes Against the Japanese), by Tsutomu Nishioka (Goku Shuppan, 2014).

Army's orders." In fact, however, operations of the "Volunteer Corps" were to provide labor for wartime industry and had nothing to do with comfort women. Japanese who lived through the war know this, and Koreans who lived under Japanese wartime administration also know this from their own experience. Japanese born in the postwar period, if they studied history, would also have this knowledge. Despite this, Mr. Uemura's article in the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that "one of the 'Korean comfort women' who was forcibly taken away under the name of the 'Women's Volunteer Corps'" has come out in public with her case. As a result, almost all Japanese came to believe that "since someone who claims to have been hunted down in a 'slave hunt' has come out in public, the Yoshida testimony must be true."

President Roh Tae-woo Said "Japanese News Media Created This Problem"

The *Asahi Shimbun* prominently reported in its January 11, 1992 front page top article, "documents showing military involvement discovered" and "the Japanese military supervised and controlled the establishment of comfort stations and the recruitment of military comfort women." On the subject of "military comfort women" the *Asahi* article went on to claim that, "the Japanese military in the Pacific war forcibly recruited mainly Korean women under the name of the Volunteer Corps. That number is said to be from 80,000 to 200,000."

This *Asahi Shimbun* account became the prototype for the Japan-bashing inscriptions engraved on comfort women monuments currently being built in various places in the United States that say, "200,000 women were forcibly recruited as sex slaves." The same *Asahi* report caused the South Korean public to become infuriated, inciting both Japanese and Koreans to raise their voices as if hypnotized, to insist that Japan "apologize for and compensate the comfort women."

It can be said that this series of mass media reports inflamed South Korean

public opinion, which in turn elevated the comfort women issue to a diplomatic problem. Then President Roh Tae-woo put it correctly when he said, “In reality the Japanese mass media were the ones who proffered this issue, inflamed our country’s anti-Japanese feelings, and embittered our people.”¹⁶

Meanwhile, around this time a steady stream of letters and messages saying, “Koreans are liars” and “I hate Korea,” arrived at the editorial department of *Gendai Koria* (Modern Korea), a Japanese language journal specializing in Korean affairs, where I was chief editor. This can be said to be the beginning of the current “hate Korea” trend. Most of those sending these messages were elderly Japanese, all from the generation that had first-hand knowledge of the war. They were trembling in anger, saying, “The Women’s Volunteer Corps and comfort women were different from each other. Yet some people contend ‘women were forcibly taken away under the name of Volunteer Corps.’ Aren’t they liars?”

Elderly South Koreans who knew the era of Japanese administration also spoke out, unanimously saying, “Korea in those days was poverty stricken. As a result, many women had to work in brothels or military comfort stations. Why is this fact not understood?”

One South Korean opposition party politician, who was more senior than former presidents Kim Yom-sam and Kim Dae-jun, told me, “Japanese and South Korean mass media report only silly things. The 2.26 Incident was an attempted military uprising against the government caused when officers read the letters to their soldiers, from their homes in the northeastern part of Japan, telling of such poverty that their younger sisters had to become prostitutes. The Korean countryside in those days was even more impoverished.”

Another South Korean, who had been mobilized to work in a wartime munitions factory in Nagasaki, filed a lawsuit against Japan for having lost part of his arm while working. He disclosed his honest feelings when he said, “We were forced

¹⁶ See *Bungei Shunju* monthly magazine, Bungei Shunju publishing company, March 1992 issue.

into mobilization by the Japanese government and suffered damage. However, the comfort women were not forced. I am troubled by their activities.”¹⁷

The Japanese Foreign Ministry Failed by Allowing the Prime Minister to Apologize without Checking the Facts

Another reason the comfort women issue became a diplomatic problem lies in the grievous diplomatic failures by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. In January 1992, the then Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa visited South Korea where he repeatedly expressed apology and remorse a total of eight times on behalf of Japan to then President Roh Tae-woo. He did this before the government checked the factual basis as to whether or not there was coercive recruitment of Korean comfort women by the Japanese authorities.

In February 1992 I met with the deputy chief of the North East Asia section of Japan’s Foreign Ministry and posed the following question.

Question: Prime Minister Miyazawa visited South Korea in January, 1991, and apologized to President Roh Tae-woo. Did he acknowledge the coercive recruitment of Korean women by Japanese authorities and apologize for it? Or considering the case of wartime Japan’s Yoshiwara district where many Japanese women worked who had been sold into prostitution due to poverty, did Prime Minister Miyazawa apologize by saying ‘he is sorry’ for the tragedy of all those wartime women who were sold into prostitution due to poverty? Of these two cases, which was it? If it was the latter, why is it the Japanese government does not apologize to those women who worked in Yoshiwara?

To this question, the deputy head of the Northeast Asia Section of the Foreign Ministry answered, “We will look into it” which was shocking to me. Then I asked a further question, “How do you view Seiji Yoshida’s testimony that

¹⁷ Ibid., footnote 15, *Nikkan no gokai no shin'en* (The Abyss of Japan–South Korea Misunderstanding), by Tsutomu Nishioka, (Aki Shobo, 1992).

he was involved in a comfort women hunt under military orders?” He replied that “we cannot yet judge that either. I can only say it is hard to imagine that a perpetrator would make a confession by lying.”

In June 2014 a report on the process of the making of the Kono Statement was released by the Japanese government.¹⁸ A significant point confirmed in the report is that the Japanese government apologized to South Korea without investigating the facts. Relevant sections read as follows:

After the first former comfort woman came forward in the ROK on August 14, 1991, three former comfort women from the ROK filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court on December 6 of the same year. Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa was scheduled to visit the ROK in January 1992, but amid growing interest in the comfort women issue and mounting anti-Japanese criticism in the ROK, diplomatic authorities in Japan and the ROK became concerned that the issue would surface as an outstanding issue during the Prime Minister’s visit to the ROK.... As of December 1991, the Japanese side was already confidentially considering within their government that, “It would be appropriate if the Prime Minister could effectively accept the involvement of the Japanese military, and make an expression of remorse and regret,” but also that, “There is a possibility that public opinion in the ROK will not be appeased simply with a verbal apology alone.” One option that was being cited was to make a symbolic gesture in the form of erecting a memorial for the comfort women.

In August 1991, the *Asahi Shimbun* published a fabricated article in which its reporter Takashi Uemura wrote that a former comfort woman had raised her voice, claiming to have been forcibly recruited as a member of the Women’s Volunteer Corps. This led to the former comfort woman filing a lawsuit

¹⁸ Ibid, footnote 7, “*The Details of Exchanges Between Japan and The Republic of Korea (ROK) Regarding The Comfort Women Issue—From the Drafting of the Kono Statement to the Asian Women’s Fund*” (June 20, 2014), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000042167.pdf>.

against the Japanese government at the encouragement of Japanese activists and lawyers. She was a victim of poverty as a matter of fact and had been sold by her own mother to a kisaeng house for 40 yen; she was not a victim of coercive recruitment by Japanese authorities. Yet, without investigating the relevant factual background, officials inside the Japanese government began considering making an apology. They theorized that “it would be appropriate if the Prime Minister could effectively accept the involvement of the Japanese military and make an expression of remorse and regret,” while admitting that “there is a possibility that public opinion in the ROK will not be appeased simply with a verbal apology alone.”¹⁹

The essence of the comfort women issue is that in the early 1990’s a fiction was accepted as fact in the public opinion of both Japan and South Korea. The fiction is that “Japan as a nation coercively recruited numerous Korean women into the Volunteer Corps to make them comfort women.” Using “evidence” such as Seiji Yoshida’s false testimony, anti-Japanese forces in Japan and Korea found the news media of both countries willing to write stories that inflamed public sentiment. Against that backdrop the Japanese government, without any effort to investigate the truth of the allegations, simply continued apologizing.

Subsequently, heated public debate unfolded in Japan, and by 1997 the fiction had collapsed. In South Korea, by contrast, the fiction fortified itself as Koreans in the generation who personally experienced the era of Japanese administration dwindled. In 2005 the Roh Moo-hyon government of South Korea adopted a policy of seeking state reparations from Japan on the comfort women issue. Then in 2011 the South Korean Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional the South Korean Foreign Ministry’s posture of not previously seeking reparations on behalf of former comfort women. Subsequently, both the Lee Myung-bak government and the Park Geun-hye government again brought the comfort women issue back into their diplomacy with Japan. As a consequence, many Japanese have been driven

¹⁹ Ibid., footnote 18, p. 1

into disliking South Korea.²⁰

Part 3: A Comfort Woman who Saved 25,000 Yen and the Actual Circumstances of Life in a Comfort Station

Introducing Evidence of the Life of Comfort Women in the Comfort Stations and How It Was Far Different from that of “Sex Slaves”

A slave is an entity that is a human being and yet the subject of another’s ownership. A slave is not permitted human dignity, rights or freedom but is treated as the possession of others and subjected to the owner’s total control, including forced labor and purchase and sale. Then, were comfort women slaves? If so, who had ownership of them? One who is the object of another’s ownership also may not receive compensation for their labor. However, it is clear that many comfort women had an extraordinarily large income, far exceeding the salary of military officers at the time, and these comfort women were also remitting large amounts of money back home.

The conclusion is that comfort women were an expansion into the war zone of the public prostitution system in existence at the time. Life in comfort stations in those days was not fundamentally different from life in ordinary public prostitution houses in both the Japanese homeland and Japan-administered Korea. Mr. Ikuhiko Hata, a historian who has been studying the comfort women issue, stated that “it is appropriate to define the system of ‘the comfort women’ or ‘military comfort women’ as the war zone version of the public prostitution system that had been established in prewar Japan.”²¹ The U.S. Army unit that investigated the Japanese military’s war crimes toward the end of the war stated in one of its reports that “A ‘comfort girl’ is nothing more than a prostitute or ‘professional camp follower’ attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers.” It is clear that the comfort

²⁰ See *Asahi Shimbun: Nihon-jin e no daizai* (Asahi Shimbun: Serious Crimes Against the Japanese), by Tsutomu Nishioka (Goku Shuppan, 2014)

²¹ See *Ianfu to Senjō no Sei* (Comfort Women and Sex in the War Zone), by Ikuhiko Hata (Shincho-sha, 1999), p. 27.

women system was viewed as an extension of the established Japanese domestic prostitution system.²²

The *Sankei Shimbun* also reported in its November 27, 2014 edition as follows: “From 2000 and for the following eight years, the U.S. government under both Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush conducted a large-scale re-investigation of war crimes by Germany and Japan and yet did not find a single page of official government or military documentation that would constitute evidence of Japanese war crimes related to Korean comfort women, or any ‘institutional enslavement of women.’ It was revealed that during the war era the U.S. military considered Japan’s comfort women system as a mere extension of Japan’s domestic prostitution system.”²³

Other specific cases illustrating the life of comfort women are introduced below.

In 1991 a South Korean former comfort woman Moon Ok-ju, visited a post office in Shimonoseki city, Japan, and requested payment of the savings she had deposited during the war. The post office found the records and was able to confirm that as a comfort woman she had saved 26,245 yen. During the war this amount was large enough to buy several houses in Tokyo. In comparison, the yearly wartime salary of a four-star general was approximately 6,600 yen and that of an army private was approximately 72 yen. It is clear from this that as a comfort woman in the war zone Ms. Moon was in an economically beneficial situation and far from being a “sex slave.”

²² See Appendix, *Report No. 49: Japanese Prisoners of War Interrogation on Prostitution*, United States Office of War Information, Psychological Warfare Team, Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater APO 689 ... Prisoners: 20 Korean Comfort Girls (October 1, 1944).

²³ This research began in 2000, in accordance with the United States’ statutes *The Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act of 1998* and *The Japanese Imperial Government Disclosure Act of 2000*, for the purpose of thoroughly implementing the laws’ objective of providing the disclosure of information concerning war crimes committed by Germany and Japan during World War II. An Interagency Working Group (IWG) including representatives from the Department of Defense, Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) examined previously classified documents pertaining to Nazi war crimes as well as Japanese Imperial Government records and released those that could be declassified to the public. The result of the research was summarized in a report to Congress that was released in April 2007.

Some scholars argue that in the war zone, the real value of this amount of money was low due to rampant inflation. However, Ms. Moon Ok-ju testified that she had also remitted 5,000 yen to her family back home and that the money had reached them.²⁴

According to the testimony of former Japanese officers, many Korean comfort women saved large amounts of money in the combat zone and remitted more than a little of their savings back home to their families.²⁵

The testimony of Mr. S.G. (initials only), currently a resident of Osaka city, provides another example. He was stationed in Mianyang (Benyo) Prefecture, Hubei Province, in the Wuhan region of central China, as a paymaster sergeant attached to the headquarters of the 3rd Battalion of the 216 Infantry Regiment. Mr. S.G. testified that “Korean comfort women working in the comfort station for that unit on average earned 150 yen to 220 yen per person per month as take-home pay and were remitting home a minimum of 150 yen per month. Mr. S.G. further testified that whenever he went on an assignment to Hankou, where the Army field post office was located, the merchants who ran the comfort stations were also on the same truck, and he saw them “tightly holding bags full of money, wheat flour sacks stuffed with bank notes, on their way to the post office for remittance.”²⁶

There is also the diary of a Korean comfort station employee, which was discovered by Seoul National University Professor Emeritus An Byeong-jik. The diary contained the entry: “I remitted 600 yen from the Central Post Office that one of the comfort women asked me to withdraw from her savings

²⁴ See *Mun Ok-ju: Biruma sensen Tate shidan no “ianfu” datta watashi* (I who Was a Comfort Woman for Division Tate on the Burmese Front), narration and commentary by Moon Ok-ju / Morikawa Machiko (Nashinokisha, 1996).

²⁵ See *Shōgen: Gun–kan yonjūnin ga nokoshita omei e no hanron* (Testimony: A Rebuttal of Defamatory Accusations by 40 Former Japanese Military and Government Personnel), commentary and analysis by Tsutomu Nishioka, *Seiron* monthly magazine, Sankei Shimbun publishing company, December 2014 issue.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, footnote 25.

and send out.” (Dated October 27, 1944.)²⁷

Additional interesting evidence came through the testimony of Takeo Suzuki, Chief of the Economic Security Section, Kaijo Prefectural Police, Mukden Province, Manchukuo. Mr. Suzuki became a policeman in Manchukuo in August 1943, and was assigned to the Kaijo Prefectural Police as the head of the Economic Security Section in February 1944. In his testimony, Mr. Suzuki said, “I interviewed comfort women and gave permission for them to work,” adding the following:²⁸

Mr. Suzuki: What are now called comfort women—except that there was no such word as comfort women then, but they were called *shakufu* (bar maids) ... Women were coming to the police station with applications for becoming a *shakufu*... They could not do business without a permit. They were mostly Korean and were coming to me to submit a copy of their family register, doctor’s health certificate, parental agreement, applicant’s photograph, and application for work. Therefore it was not coercive recruitment, nothing like women being forcibly taken away. How in the world would abducted parties come in with a parental agreement and copy of their family register? I, as the head of the Security section, looked at these sets of documents, interviewed the applicants, matched them with their photograph, and confirmed by asking, “Weren’t you forced to do this? Weren’t you forcibly taken away?” That was to confirm that the women were not becoming *shakufu* against their wishes. When the applicant said “No,” then I put a stamp of approval on their application and submitted it to the chief of the police station, then generally within one week the permit was issued. Then I called the merchants, informing them of issuance of the permit and they would come and pick it up.

²⁷ See *Mainichi Shimbun*, August 7, 2014 issue.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, footnote 25. Questions from an interview at Mr. Suzuki’s residence on April 25, 1998. Testimony was given in response to questions posed by Professor Akira Nakamura, Dokkyo University, Japan, representing the Showa History Study Institute.

Mr. Nakamura: Then the comfort women in Manchuko were under the jurisdiction of the police, not the military?

Mr. Suzuki: Yes, yes. It was not the military....

Mr. Nakamura: How did they gather women?

Mr. Suzuki: I asked the women why in the world they came all the way to Manchuko. They answered, "Of course, Mister, the money is good...."

Mr. Suzuki: The most popular of the women, who went by the name Oshuku, told me that she was making as much as 300 yen per month [current value 900,000 yen]. Those were the days when the average salary for a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University was about 70 yen a month.

One Korean woman told me that since she was making so much money, "I sent my family money, had a house built there, and bought a field of land. Now I intend to go home with my savings."

In those days there was an established public prostitution system. The comfort women system was its expansion into the war zone.

The U.S. Army report on the interrogation of Korean comfort women, attached at the end of this essay, is strongly recommended as supplemental reading on this history. The wartime comfort women were making a generally high income as the ability of comfort station merchants to exploit the women was limited under strict monitoring by the police and military because they were in a war zone. On the other hand, it is also true that the freedom of movement of comfort women was restricted because the war was going on and there were considerations for both personal security and military operations.

In conclusion, life in the comfort stations in those days was essentially not different from the life of those working in public prostitution houses either

in Japan or Japan-administered Korea.

The women who worked in public prostitution houses and wartime comfort stations because of poverty of course suffered serious infringement of their human rights if judged by present-day moral values. Unfortunately, in order to eradicate such tragedies it was first necessary to resolve the problem of “absolute poverty” through high economic growth in postwar Japan and South Korea. That is a historical fact.

Appendix

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
Psychological Warfare Team
Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater
APO 689

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Psychological Warfare Team
Attached to U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater
APO 689

Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49.	Place interrogated: Date Interrogated: Date of Report: By:	Ledo Stockade Aug. 20 - Sept. 10, 1944 October 1, 1944 T/3 Alex Yorichi
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Prisoners:	20 Korean Comfort Girls
Date of Capture:	August 10, 1944
Date of Arrival at Stockade:	August 15, 1944

PREFACE:

This report is based on the information obtained from the interrogation of twenty Korean “comfort girls” and two Japanese civilians captured around the tenth of August, 1944 in the mopping up operations after the fall of Myitkyina in Burma.

The report shows how the Japanese recruited these Korean “comfort girls”, the conditions under which they lived and worked, their relations with and reaction to the Japanese soldier, and their understanding of the military situation.

A “comfort girl” is nothing more than a prostitute or “professional camp follower” attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers. The word “comfort girl” is peculiar to the Japanese. Other reports show the “comfort girls” have been found wherever it was necessary for the Japanese Army to fight. This report however deals only with the Korean “comfort girls” recruited by the Japanese and attached to their Army in Burma. The Japanese are reported to have shipped some 703 of these girls to Burma in 1942.

RECRUITING:

Early in May of 1942 Japanese agents arrived in Korea for the purpose of enlisting Korean girls for “comfort service” in newly conquered Japanese territories in

Southeast Asia. The nature of this “service” was not specified but it was assumed to be work connected with visiting the wounded in hospitals, rolling bandages, and generally making the soldiers happy. The inducement used by these agents was plenty of money, an opportunity to pay off the family debts, easy work, and the prospect of a new life in a new land, Singapore. On the basis of these false representations many girls enlisted for overseas duty and were rewarded with an advance of a few hundred yen.

The majority of the girls were ignorant and uneducated, although a few had been connected with [*sic*]“oldest profession on earth” before. The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to war for the “house master” for a period of from six months to a year depending on the family debt for which they were advanced ...

Approximately 800 of these girls were recruited in this manner and they landed with their Japanese “house master” at Rangoon around August 20th, 1942. They came in groups of from eight to twenty-two. From here they were distributed to various parts of Burma, usually to fair sized towns near Japanese Army camps. Eventually four of these units reached the Myitkyina. They were, Kyoei, Kinsui, Bakushinro, and Momoya. The Kyoei house was called the “Maruyama Club”, but was changed when the girls reached Myitkyina as Col.Maruyama [*sic*], commander of the garrison at Myitkyina, objected to the similarity to his name.

PERSONALITY:

The interrogations show the average Korean “comfort girl” to be about twenty-five years old, uneducated, childish, and selfish. She is not pretty either by Japanese or [*sic*] Caucasian standards. She is inclined to be egotistical and likes to talk about herself. Her attitude in front of strangers is quiet and demure, but she “knows the wiles of a woman.” She claims to dislike her “profession” and would rather not talk either about it or her family. Because of the kind treatment she received as a prisoner from American soldiers at Myitkyina and Ledo, she feels that they are more emotional than Japanese soldiers. She is afraid of Chinese and Indian troops.

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS:

In Myitkyina the girls were usually quartered in a large two story house (usually a school building) with a separate room for each girl. There each girl lived, slept, and transacted business. In Myitkyina their food was prepared by and purchased from the “house master” as they received no regular ration from the Japanese Army. They lived

in near-luxury in Burma in comparison to other places. This was especially true of their second year in Burma. They lived well because their food and material was not heavily rationed and they had plenty of money with which to purchase desired articles. They were able to buy cloth, shoes, cigarettes, and cosmetics to supplement the many gifts given to them by soldiers who had received “comfort bags” from home.

While in Burma they amused themselves by participating in sports events with both officers and men, and attended picnics, entertainments, and social dinners. They had a phonograph and in the towns they were allowed to go shopping.

PRIOR SYSTEM:

The conditions under which they transacted business were regulated by the Army, and in congested areas regulations were strictly enforced. The Army found it necessary in congested areas to install a system of prices, priorities, and schedules for the various units operating in a [sic] particular areas. According to interrogations the average system was as follows:

- | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|----------|------------------|
| 1. Soldiers | 10 AM to 5 PM | 1.50 yen | 20 to 30 minutes |
| 2. NCOs | 5 PM to 9 PM | 3.00 yen | 30 to 40 minutes |
| 3. Officers | 9 PM to 12 PM | 5.00 yen | 30 to 40 minutes |

These were average prices in Central Burma. Officers were allowed to stay overnight for twenty yen. In Myitkyina Col. Maruyama slashed the prices to almost one-half of the average price.

SCHEDULES:

The soldiers often complained about congestion in the houses. In many situations they were not served and had to leave as the army was very strict about over-staying. In order to overcome this problem the Army set aside certain days for certain units. Usually two men from the unit for the day were stationed at the house to identify soldiers. A roving MP was also on hand to keep order. Following is the schedule used by the “Kyoei” house for the various units of the 18th Division while at Naymyo.

Sunday	————	18th Div. Hdqs. Staff
Monday	————	Cavalry
Tuesday	————	Engineers

Wednesday ——— Day off and weekly physical exam.
Thursday ——— Medics
Friday ——— Mountain artillery
Saturday ——— Transport

Officers were allowed to come seven nights a week. The girls complained that even with the schedule congestion was so great that they could not care for all guests, thus causing ill feeling among many of the soldiers.

Soldiers would come to the house, pay the price and get tickets of cardboard about two inches square with the prior on the left side and the name of the house on the other side. Each soldier's identity or rank was then established after which he "took his turn in line". The girls were allowed the prerogative of refusing a customer. This was often done if the person were too drunk.

PAY AND LIVING CONDITIONS;

The "house master" received fifty to sixty per cent of the girls' gross earnings depending on how much of a debt each girl had incurred when she signed her contract. This meant that in an average month a girl would gross about fifteen hundred yen. She turned over seven hundred and fifty to the "master". Many "masters" made life very difficult for the girls by charging them high prices for food and other articles.

In the latter part of 1943 the Army issued orders that certain girls who had paid their debt could return home. Some of the girls were thus allowed to return to Korea.

The interrogations further show that the health of these girls was good. They were well supplied with all types of contraceptives, and often soldiers would bring their own which had been supplied by the army. They were well trained in looking after both themselves and customers in the matter of hygiene. A regular Japanese Army doctor visited the houses once a week and any girl found diseased was given treatment, secluded, and eventually sent to a hospital. This same procedure was carried on within the ranks of the Army itself, but it is interesting to note that a soldier did not lose pay during the period he was confined.

REACTIONS TO JAPANESE SOLDIERS;

In their relations with the Japanese officers and men only two names of

any consequence came out of interrogations. They were those of Col. Maruyama, commander of the garrison at Myitkyina and Maj. Gen. Mizukami [*sic*], who brought in reinforcements. The two were exact opposites. The former was hard, selfish and repulsive with no consideration for his men; the latter a good, kind man and a fine soldier, with the utmost consideration for those who worked under him. The Colonel was a constant habitué of the houses while the General was never known to have visited them. With the fall of Myitkyina, Col. Maruyama supposedly deserted while Gen. Mizukami committed suicide because he could not evacuate the men.

SOLDIERS REACTIONS;

The average Japanese soldier is embarrassed about being seen in a “comfort house” according to one of the girls who said, “when the place is packed he is apt to be ashamed if he has to wait in line for his turn”. However there were numerous instances of proposals of marriage and in certain cases marriages actually took place.

All the girls agreed that the worst officers and men who came to see them were those who were drunk and leaving for the front the following day. But all likewise agreed that even though very drunk the Japanese soldier never discussed military matters or secrets with them. Though the girls might start the conversation about some military matter the officer or enlisted man would not talk, but would in fact “scold us for discussing such un-lady like subjects. Even Col. Maruyama when drunk would never discuss such matters.”

The soldiers would often express how much they enjoyed receiving magazines, letters and newspapers from home. They also mentioned the receipt of “comfort bags” filled with canned goods, magazines, soap, handkerchiefs, toothbrush, miniature doll, lipstick, and wooden clothes. The lipstick and cloths were feminine and the girls couldn't understand why the people at home were sending such articles. They speculated that the sender could only have had themselves or the “native girls” [*sic*].

REACTION TO THE MILITARY SITUATION;

It appears they knew very little about the military situation around Myitkyina even up to and including the time of their retreat and capture. There is however some information worth nothing:

“ In the initial attack on Myitkyina and the airstrip about two hundred Japanese

died in battle, leaving about two hundred to defend the town. Ammunition was very low.

“ Col. Maruyama dispersed his men. During the following days the enemy were shooting haphazardly everywhere. It was a waste since they didn't seem to aim at any particular thing. The Japanese soldiers on the other hand had orders to fire one shot at a time and only when they were sure of a hit.”

Before the enemy attacked on the west airstrip, soldiers stationed around Myitkyina were dispatched elsewhere, to storm the Allied attack in the North and West. About four hundred men were left behind, largely from the 114th Regiment. Evidently Col. Maruyama did not expect the town to be attacked. Later Maj. Gen. Mizukami of the 56th Division brought in reinforcements of more than two regiments but these were unable to hold the town.

It was the consensus among the girls that Allied bombings were intense and frightening and because of them they spent most of their last days in foxholes. One or two even carried on work there. The comfort houses were bombed and several of the girls were wounded and killed.

RETREAT AND CAPTURE;

The story of the retreat and final capture of the “comfort girls” is somewhat vague and confused in their own minds. From various reports it appears that the following occurred: on the night of July 31st a party of sixty three people including the “comfort girls” of three houses (Bakushinro was merged with Kinsui), families, and helpers, started across the Irrawaddy River in small boats. They eventually landed somewhere near Waingmaw. They stayed there until August 4th, but never entered Waingmaw. From there they followed in the path of a group of soldiers until August 7th when there was a skirmish with the enemy and the party split up. The girls were ordered to follow the soldiers after a three-hour interval. They did this only to find themselves on the bank of a river with no sign of the soldiers or any means of crossing. They remained in a nearby house until August 10th when they were captured by Kachin soldiers led by an English officer. They were taken to Myitkyina and then to the Ledo stockade where the interrogations which form the basis of this report took place.

PROPAGANDA;

The girls know practically nothing of any propaganda leaflets that had been used

against the Japanese. They had seen a few leaflets in the hands of the soldiers but most of them were unable to understand them as they were in Japanese and the soldiers refused to discuss them with the girls. One girl remembered the leaflet about Col. Maruyama (apparently it was Myitkyina Troop Appeal), but she did not believe it. Others heard the soldiers discussing leaflets from time to time but no tangible remarks resulted from their eavesdropping. However it is interesting to note that one officer expressed the view that “Japan can’t win this war”.

REQUESTS:

None of the girls appeared to have heard the loudspeaker used at Myitkyina but very [*sic*] did overhear the soldiers mention a “radio broadcast”.

They asked that leaflets telling of the capture of the “comfort girls” should not be used for it would endanger the lives of other girls if the Army knew of their capture. They did think it would be a good idea to utilize the fact of their capture in any droppings planned for Korea.

Appendix “A”

Following are the names of the twenty Korean “comfort girls” and the two Japanese civilians interrogated to obtain the information used in the reports. The Korean names are phoneticized.

[Omitted for reasons of privacy.]

About the Author

TSUTOMU NISHIOKA is a professor at Tokyo Christian University, where he has taught since 1991. He is a scholar specializing in Korean peninsula studies, for which he developed a passion early in his education. He was an exchange student at Yonsei University in the International Division (1977-78) during his undergraduate studies at Tokyo International Christian University (BA, 1979). While completing his Master Degree in Area Studies at Tsukuba University (MA, 1983), he was selected as a Foreign Ministry Research Fellow for which he was assigned to the Embassy of Japan in Seoul, South Korea, from 1982-84. He is known for his research and prolific writing on contemporary Korean issues and served as the Editor in Chief of the foreign affairs journal *Gendai Koria* (Today's Korea) from 1990-2000. Among his many books, the following relate closely to his most recent examination of South Korean-Japanese history and the comfort women issue: *Nikkan gokai no shin'en* (The Abyss of Japan-South Korean Misunderstanding), Aki Shobo (1992); *Koria tabū o toku* (Solving the Korea Taboo), Aki Shobo (2007); *Yami ni idomu: Rachi, kiga, ianfu, han-nichi o dō haaku suru ka* (Deciphering the Darkness: Abductions, Starvation, Comfort Women and the Anti-Japan Movement), Tokuma Shoten (1998-99); *Nikkan "rekishi mondai" no shinjitsu* (The Truth About the Japan-South Korea History Issue), PHP Research Institute (2005); *Yoku wakarū ianfu mondai: Zōho shimpan* (The Comfort Women Issue Decoded, Revised Edition), Soshisha (2012).