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A Comprehensive Study to Resolve the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' Issue (I) : Mobilization in Joseon for Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' : Roles of Recruiters, Service Business Owners, and Japanese Military Contractors

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A Comprehensive Study to Resolve the Japanese Military ‘Comfort Women’ Issue (I)¹⁾: Mobilization in Joseon for Japanese Military ‘Comfort Women’

Roles of Recruiters, Service Business Owners, and Japanese Military Contractors

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1. Background

Unlike other East-Asian regions which the Japanese military occupied then forced women as military ‘comfort women’ in a collective, violent, and overt manner, it was more difficult to forcibly and openly mobilize women in Joseon around the 1930s and 40s

1) This study can be divided into two major topics. First is a study of the historical records related to the mobilization of ‘comfort women’ which, more specifically, consists of the major trend and issues of Japanese military ‘comfort women’, mobilization of women for the Japanese military ‘comfort women’ system, and conditions of mobilization and victimization stated in victim testimonies. The second topic of the study is on victims’ psychosocial aftermath, which consists of oral statement analysis, art therapy analysis, and physical-psychological examination result analysis. Since this English research paper cannot hold the entire content of the original study, it focuses on the roles that recruiters, service business owners, and Japanese military contractors took in the ‘comfort women’ system and in mobilizing Joseon women.

under the Japanese colonization. The Japanese Empire attempted to mobilize Joseon people to cooperate in their war of aggression through military draft or conscription, but mobilizing women had to take a less obvious form in order to avoid Joseon people's resistance against the colonial policy.

Consequently, when the military asked for 'comfort women', the Japanese Government General of Joseon and the military headquarters in Joseon mobilized women through recruiters, service business owners, and military contractors. This paper examines literature published in Japan, Japanese news advertisements, and trial records of the Government General of Joseon²⁾ as well as Korean and Japanese newspaper articles, in order to analyze how women were mobilized in Joseon, more specifically the roles of recruiters, service business owners, Japanese military contractors, and 'comfort station' pimps played in mobilizing women.

2) This paper used the trial records of the Government General of Joseon collected from the National Archives of Korea by the Academy of Korean Studies.

2. Roles of Recruiters, Service Business Owners, and Japanese Military Contractors

A. The Role of Recruiters

The Government General of Joseon and the military headquarters of Joseon took a central role and used recruiters, service business owners, and military contractors to mobilize women when ‘comfort women’ were asked for by the Japanese military. This chapter examines how recruiters found women and what role they played in mobilizing military ‘comfort women’.

Except for near the end of the Japanese colonization in which forced mobilization took place, Joseon people at the time searched for jobs through recruiters unless they were able to directly visit the business to apply. Even though recruiting businesses were supposed to help women suffering from poverty and help them make a living and provide for their families³⁾, the reality was quite different.

The biggest problem was that the state-regulated prostitution system of the Japanese colonial period was built on human trafficking. The recruiting/headhunting business was established as well as regulations for the business - the regulations were introduced to each province at different times.

Yet, only few provinces were equipped with countermeasures against illegal actions or qualification standards for recruiters (Yun, 2015: 391), and the authority was much less interested in enforcing these rules compared to in Japan. As a result, the trafficking of women rapidly increased and became widespread, as prostitution related businesses

3) Hanseong Daily News. 1948, Sep. 12. “Statement” (recruiters in Seoul).

such as state regulated prostitution systems were becoming normalized in Joseon under the pressure of modernization and colonization.

Recruiters, regardless of their intent, were always connected to traffickers. They collaborated with traffickers either by sending kidnapped/threatened women to restaurants, *kashizashiki* (*Yugwak*, a type of brothel) pimps, and comfort stations, or by not asking whether they had been trafficked.

Detective Lee at the Busan police station acknowledged an abduction ring taking women in the east part of the city, and launched their investigation. On the 29th, they arrested Hyeon-ryong Choi (34) from Showa Street in Gunsan City in front of Busan Station. He was then interrogated and then confessed that he had collaborated with a vicious trafficker, counterfeited contracts, and was keeping women at a restaurant called *Daeshin-Jeong* in the east of the city to sell them to the north of China⁴).

The listed offences include kidnapping for financial gain, counterfeiting private documents, and overseas trafficking in person. Hyeon-ryong Choi was a trafficker who recruited women and attempted to send them abroad through another trafficker. Even though it is not clear whether he was trafficking military ‘comfort women’ as the article stated that the women were to be shipped to the north of China, it gives us a clue as to how women were trafficked at the time. Unfortunately, there aren’t any more articles mentioning him, although he would have been put on a trial in Joseon after his arrest in Busan.

Oral testimonies of the victims were analyzed to grasp what recruiters’

4) Osaka Daily News (West Edition). 1938, Jul. 30. “A vicious trafficker arrested for kidnapping five women and confining them at a restaurant”, p.5.

roles were in mobilizing military ‘comfort women’. There were only six people who mentioned recruiters among the entire collection of victim testimonies which equals about ten books. Unless the victims were directly in contact with the service business owners and became military ‘comfort women’ through them, recruiters would be required to connect women with comfort station pimps. The recruiters were not clearly visible in the testimony as many victims did not even know the existence of the recruitment business at the time. This is because many recruiters were closely connected to traffickers and dispatched employees outside to get women instead of waiting for women at designated offices.

According to victim testimonies, only a few women recognized the existence of recruiters. Sun-ok Lee (alias), who fell victim to employment fraud, was supposed to be hired at a silk factory under the consent of her parents, but ended up traveling to Guandong in China through Daegu and Pyeongyang on a train and a truck with other women. Mr. Oh, who recruited her, left shortly after talking to a Japanese soldier. A woman from Jeolla-do, who had also lived in Japan, became her manager (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan & Korea Chongshindae’s Institute, 1993: 71-73). Sang-ok Lee stated that there was a Korean man from the recruiter’s office as well as a Japanese civilian military worker who went around multiple provinces in search of women⁵⁾, and that the recruiter mobilized women all the way to the pimp in Palau (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for

5) She stated that she had left to get a job at a factory in Japan without her parents’ or guardians’ consent at the age of fifteen in 1936, only to learn that she had been tricked by a ‘Japanese civilian military worker’ and that she arrived at Palau to become a military ‘comfort woman’.

Military Sexual Slavery by Japan & Korea Chongshindae's Institute, 1993: 185-187). Recruiters traveled around to different regions to gather women, and there were also cases like that of Sun-ae Park (alias) in which women waited at a recruiter's office for pimps who would pay for them. Since recruiters were expanding their 'business' by traveling and connecting with each other in different regions, it is more likely that the process of trafficking involved recruiters, even though they were not mentioned often in the collection of testimonies.

The following news advertisement also suggests that recruiters supplied women to military comfort stations. It's probably that these advertisements were targeting traffickers, restaurant owners, and *kashizashiki* pimps to mobilize women rather than directly targeting individual women (Kang, 2010: 111-112).

Comfort Women Urgently Wanted - Major recruitment
 Age: Between seventeen and twenty-three
 Place of work: Military comfort station, at the rear of the battle ground
 Monthly payment: Over 300 yen (advance payment available up to 3,000 yen)
 Visit between 8 am and 10 pm
 4-20 Shin-jeong, Jung-gu, Kyung-sung-bu
 Business title: Recruitment office
 Telephone: ☎ 1613

Source: Gyeong-seong Daily News, 1944, Jul. 23. p.4; 1944, Jul. 24. p.2.

[Material 1] News advertisement on Gyeong-seong Daily News

On the other hand, even though trial records do not directly mention military comfort stations, they confirm that the authority in Joseon made regulations for 'comfort women' mobilization and enforced them according to demand from the Japanese military. The authority

forced women who were sold as ‘comfort women’ to keep silent in order to find enough women for military comfort stations

Sun-im shin (24) was of a poor family, and was recruited by Man-gyu Seo (121 jeongmok 2, Seodaemun-jeong, Kyeongseong-bu) to become a *chang-gi* (prostitute) in March of 1938, following her parents’ intention. She came back to Joseon in mid-August of 1939 and visited Seo’s house, then stated ‘*chang-gis* at the front line face great danger since they’re basically in the middle of a battlefield. I will never become a *chang-gi* at any Japanese military comfort house.’ Jongno police station noticed that she started a canard related to the military and interrogated the case. They found out that Shin who was employed as a prostitute had to satisfy seventy clients daily, and this led to physical damages including loss of appetite, backache, and other illnesses. She finally managed to pay back the advance payment in mid-August and came back to Joseon. She was concerned that she would be sold again as a *chang-gi* and visited Seo to talk to him [about what happened to her]. The police had sympathy for her situation and put her in custody on September 11th for seven days for breaking the police regulation Article 1 Protocol 21, according to the chief district attorney’s order at Kyeongseong local court.

Source: Confidential document No. 2303 from Gyeong-gi Police to the chief of police and a district attorney at Gyeongseong Regional Court (1939)

[Material 2] “On penalization of a person spreading a canard”, Sep. 13, 1939. Confidential document No. 2303⁶⁾.

Even though there isn’t much literature clearly stating the relations between the military ‘comfort women’ system and recruitment businesses, the story above reveals a case of women being turned into military ‘comfort women’. The case shared above may have been edited and contain untruthful information since it was written by the police and

6) Retrieved from
http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?jsessionid=49AE8D40A44D1EA925D55A39F8673969?levelId=had_165_0740

those who gave testimony against the Japanese military could have faced penalization. Even considering that this note may not be completely true, it still confirms certain facts as follows: first, sun-im shin was in poverty and was sent to a comfort station as a ‘comfort woman’ in Nanjing with an advance payment at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three, following her parents’ intention; second, unlike her expectations, she had to take seventy men a day, and she fell ill as a result; third, she paid back all of her advance payment and came back to Joseon after a year and a half; fourth, she was concerned that she may be sold again and told her recruiter as said above.

Another case reveals how recruiters and service business owners mobilized women. This case is the only case mentioning ‘comfort women’ among all the trial records of the Government General of Joseon (file No. CJA0000687, Showa 19, preliminaries No. 6). The result of the preliminary hearings on Kayama and Shimizu can be summarized as follows.

Defendant Kayama, working as a clerk at the Hwajeon recruiting office in Suncheon, saw Miyamoto visit the Jongno recruiting office to look for a job at a restaurant or any other job for monthly payment, and planned to kidnap her and extort her advance payment. He lied to her that he was the accountant at a restaurant called Hirakbyeolgwan in Suncheon-eup, and that he could give her 150 won if she worked as an assistant. Even though he knew her parents were alive, he brought her to Suncheon-eup in order to make her work as a hostess at Hirakbyeolgwan and take her money, without her parents’ consent. He then contacted Shimizu to make a deal to hire her at a restaurant. Shimizu answered that the restaurant was now closed and his office was not looking for any women, but

another restaurant called Hirakjjeom in Ahseong, Ahseong-hyeon, Binjiang, Manchukuo run by the same owner was hiring ‘comfort women’. They decided to traffic her to Manchuria. She wasn’t going to get any advance payment, yet Kayama applied for an advance payment of 3,500 won to Hirakjjeom and took the money from Shimizu. Kayama then kidnapped her in order to transfer her to Manchuria, but was caught in the middle of the process (Trial record file no. CJA0000687. Showa 19, no. 6).

The defendant Kayama was prosecuted for kidnaping Miyamoto for financial gain (violation of criminal code article 215), and trafficking her overseas (violation of criminal code Article 226 Protocol 1). He was sent to the criminal collegiate trial, while defendant Shimizu’s prosecution had been withdrawn. The material doesn’t reveal much information and there isn’t any other record left on this case explaining why they were going through preliminary trials in the middle of transfer process.

What has been disclosed about recruiting businesses through this limited record is as follows: first, Kamaya was a worker at a recruiting office, and Suncheon Recruiting Office was closely connected to the Kyeongseong Recruiting Office, which means his office was working throughout multiple regions; second, he did not ask for her parents’ permission even though the parental consent was considered necessary for employment at the time, and he extorted the advance payment when there weren’t any advance payments to be given, then tried to sell her as a ‘comfort woman (*chang-gi*)’ against her will to be hired as a restaurant server; third, the prosecution for Shimizu, who was considered a conspirator of this crime, was dropped.

Yun-myeong Ha, a well-known trafficker, established close connections

to recruiters in order to traffic women and transfer them to comfort stations. He started his career as a prison guard in Daejun in 1925, and soon became known for trafficking women and girls by 1934. He ran a *chang-ga* (brothel) called Songhakru in Incheon, and made the news as a trafficker in 1939. Even after he was sent to trial, he committed the same crime again within a minimum time period before the expiration date. There is a record stating that he was operating a military comfort station in Singapore around the end of the war (Lim, 1984: 306). Combining all the pieces of information, Ha was playing a central role within the military ‘comfort women’ system from trafficking women to recruiting them for *chang-ga* to military comfort station operation.

Unlike the expectation that he would have spent a long time in prison due to the nature of his crime, he only created a storm in a tea cup in newspapers, and there isn’t any evidence that he actually served time in prison. According to records, Ha was not penalized thanks to his connections to the Japanese military and authorities in Joseon, even though the press enthusiastically covered his crimes. This is more evidence which reveals what the military ‘comfort women’ system was depending on.

Victim testimonies and other related literature show that recruiters and service business owners were quite clearly distinguished and that it was rare for a recruiter to suddenly turn into a military comfort station pimp. This is because recruiters would have to shut down their original businesses in Joseon and change jobs in order to do so. It was more common for pimps who were operating restaurants or *Yugwak* (*kashizashiki*) to become comfort station pimps.

Many cases were discovered in which traffickers or recruiters sold

women who were looking for jobs to brothels against their will in order to extort their advance payments. The counterfeiting of documents was also common in the process of trafficking. Newspapers at the time suggest that there were a number of these heinous crimes committed, yet there are only a few trial records discovered at the National Archives of Korea which are related to overseas transfers. More research is necessary on this matter, but this tendency reveals that the act of transferring humans overseas, which is a crime related to the mobilization of military 'comfort women', was rarely penalized, although other crimes such as kidnapping for financial gain were commonly punished.

B. The Role of Service Business Owners

There were cases in which restaurant owners and *kashizashiki* pimps moved to battlegrounds to become military comfort station pimps. Kyeong-ok Cho had operated Chunmokahm (*Yorijib*, restaurant) in Gwangju and Gyeong-ho Song had run Myeongwolgwang in Gyeongju before they moved to Palembang, Indonesia and began to operate military comfort stations during World War II (Kang, 2011: 301-309). They were originally both restaurant owners, which is a type of service business. There isn't any literature on how they mobilized women for their military comfort stations, but it is positive that they brought women they'd hired at their own restaurants as well as new women, in order to get enough for the comfort stations they operated. The fact that Song from Gyeongju owned two Myeongwolgwang buildings⁷⁾ and had a large number of people working closely related

7) Gwangju Daily. 1992, Jan. 16. "A list of 61 Korean women mobilized to Palembang, Sumatra"

to his comfort station suggests that he needed more women on top of the one she had hired back in Gyeongju.

There was a rule which prohibited operating a recruiting business, *kashizashiki*, and a restaurant at the same time, and this rule was designed to keep women from being trafficked. It is necessary to reveal how the relationship between recruiters and service business owners changed during the war and what roles they played in mobilizing women, but this paper limits its task to examining the demands from the military/authority and the tendency in which service business owners became military comfort women pimps as a result of entertainment business regulations.

Song and others who operated a comfort station called Myeongwolgwang in Palembang were from Noseo-ri in Gyeongju where they had also run a restaurant with the same name (The Commission on Verification and Support for the Victims of Forced Mobilization under Japanese Colonialism in Korea, 2009: 62-63). Cho was the son of Seong-sun Cho who was famous for operating a restaurant called Chunmokam in Gwangju (Park, 1994: 136-138; The Commission on Verification and Support for the Victims of Forced Mobilization under Japanese Colonialism in Korea, 2009: 63-64). Chunmokam was the most prestigious in town and catered to governors and many other public figures from Seoul and Japan (Park, 1994: 136-138). The fact that his son ran a comfort station in Palembang shows the balloon effect caused by the regulations on entertainment businesses (Park, 2014: 117), and it was the Japanese authority who ordered these regulations and actively used them for their own good.

C. The Role of Japanese Military Contractors and Others

Japanese military contractors were the ones who executed demands from the Japanese military in the battlefield. According to Yasen shuho kitei (Battlefield Canteen Regulations, 野戦酒保規定), Yasen shuhos (battlefield canteens) could have comfort facilities (Article 1), and Yasen Shuhos could hire civilian workers as contractors (Article 6)⁸⁾ (The Army Ministry of Japan Document Vol. 48, 1937).

The case which seems to be related to military contractors is as follows: A comfort station pimp named Gyeong-do Park operating in Jeokkyeong-li, Wuhan, China was identified by a civilian worker when he came back to Joseon in search of 'comfort women' (Nagasawa, 1983: 223; Yamada, 1978: 116-118; quoted from Ha, 2009: 140). Even though they were comfort station pimps, they were still considered civilian workers, as they were a type of military contractor who fulfilled military demands. It is probable that pimps who came to Joseon to mobilize women from the Burmese region were also considered civilian workers for the military.

Another person who seems to have worked as a contractor is Heo, who put out the following newspaper advertisement. One of the methods we need to pay attention to are newspaper ads from during the Pacific War. The content of one advertisement is as follows.

8) The Army Ministry of Japan Document Vol. 48 (1937, Sep. 29). Yasen shuho kitei kaisei. (陸軍省 陸達第48号(1937.9.29), 野戦酒保規程改正). Retrieved from Japan Center Asian Historical Records
<http://fightforjustice.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/5-1-1-1野戦酒保規程改正1937.9-前半.pdf>

(Military) Comfort Women Urgently Wanted
 Destination: Military comfort station (location unknown)
 Qualification for employment: Physically healthy person between the age of eighteen and thirty,
 Recruitment period: From October 27th to November 8th
 Contract and remuneration: Decided immediately after interview with applicant
 Number of recruitments: Dozens
 Applicants should visit the office at the following location and inquire
 Telephone no. Gwang ③-2645 (Last name Heo), Joseon Motel, 195 Nakwon-jeong, Jongno-gu, Gyeongseong-bu,

Source: Maeil Daily News, 1944, Oct. 27, p. 1; 1944, Nov. 1, p.2.

[Material 3] Advertisement on Maeil Daily News

People who are not familiar with the atmosphere in 1944 may think it is easy to assume that women who saw this advertisement voluntarily applied for the job. Considering the fact that every little piece of news about the military had to go through censorship, it is probable that the military authorized this advertisement (Kang, 2010: 109-110).

Dong-je Lee (37), who was arrested for kidnapping and trafficking women and girls throughout Joseon and Japan, was operating a military comfort station in Hankou, China. The Pyeongyang Local Court issued a warrant for the comfort station pimp Lee from Hankou for kidnapping women and girls. He was about to land in Nagasaki on a ship called the Shanghai which departed from Shanghai, when he was arrested by the marine police. He was labeled a serial kidnapper and handed over to the Gangseo Police Department for abducting and selling dozens of women and girls from Korea and Japan⁹⁾. His arrest made the news, but there isn't

9) Osaka Daily News (West Edition, Nagasaki). 1939, Aug. 24. "Serial kidnapper

any record proving his penalization. Because illegal actions were condoned as long as they were to satisfy the Japanese military at the time, it is likely that he was not penalized for trafficking, especially considering the fact that he was operating a comfort station in Hankou.

The Dictionary of Collaborators published by The Center for Historical Truth and Justice contains many comfort station pimps. The list also reveals the jobs they had before running comfort stations, which include hotels or recruitment businesses that are not directly connected to comfort stations. For example, Du-wuk Lim first moved to Taiwan in 1933, then to Borneo in 1942 with fifty other women according to the demand from the Southern Army Group (The Center for Historical Truth and Justice, 2009). It seems that he had already made a close connection to military comfort stations before he became an actual comfort station pimp in Borneo. Even though it may not be the case for every comfort station pimp, many of them accumulated massive fortunes by satisfying the military demand, and this was the reason people who had previously operated different businesses became interested in owning comfort stations.

from the Joseon peninsula arrested by Marine Police”. p.5.

3. Conclusion

This paper examined literature published in Japan, news advertisements, trial records from the Government General of Joseon, and news articles from Joseon and Japan, in order to analyze how Japanese military ‘comfort women’ were mobilized, focusing especially on the roles of recruiters, service business owners, and Japanese military contractors as well as comfort station pimps.

Even though the authority did bust some human traffickers and recruiters, there were only ten cases mentioning overseas transfers - a crime closely connected to the military comfort stations - among the entire trial records from 1938 to 1945 related to trafficking such as kidnapping for financial gain, fraud, and overseas transfers. Out of those ten cases, only one mentioned the term military comfort station, which was the preliminaries (file no. CJA0000687) on Kayama and Shimizu who attempted to transfer a woman in 1944. The other case mentioned is that of Sun-im Shin (Material 2) from the National Institute of Korean History. Although it is possible that the National Archives of Korea may not have all the records from the Japanese colonial period, two is much too low compared to records on other crimes prosecuted at the time.

Such a small number of cases suggests that the crimes committed by traffickers and recruiters were connected to the authorities, and were being protect by them. There were cases in which the offenders were not put in custody even though the actions were considered criminal. Ha, who made the news in 1939, and other recruiters mentioned by the victims of the military ‘comfort women’ system are examples of this tendency.

What can be deduced is that the reason those who took part in trafficking women were not penalized was because they were in a cooperative relationship with the Japanese Government and not that the authority in Joseon was uninterested in busting traffickers and recruiters. The fact that other criminals without connections to the Japanese authorities were still being penalized suggests that crimes committed for the Japanese military were given special exceptions.

To grasp how women entered the military 'comfort women' system or state-regulated prostitution system in the Japanese colonial period, it is crucial to understand specifically who participated in mobilizing women. Trial related records which have been discovered recently as well as other sources of information will have to be studied more comprehensively and thoroughly in the future.

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