

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

Japanese Prisoner  
of War Interrogation  
Report No. 49.

Place interrogated: Ledo Stockade  
Date interrogated: Aug. 20 - Sept. 10, 1944  
Date of Report: October 1, 1944  
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Prisoners : 20 Korean Comfort Girls  
Date of Capture : August 10, 1944  
Date of Arrival : August 15, 1944  
at Stockade

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**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 "oldest profession on earth" before. The contract they signed bound them to Army regulations and to work 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 vicinity. 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, 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 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 particular area. 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 overstaying. 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 Maymyo;

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, 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 habitue 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 clogs. The lipstick and clogs were definitely 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" in mind.

### **REACTION TO THE MILITARY SITUATION;**

It appears that they know 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 noting;

"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 stem 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 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 Kaahin soldiers led by an English officer. They were taken to Myitkyina and then to the Ledo stockade where the interrogation 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 were Myitkyina Troop Appeal), but she did not believe it. Other 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 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.