

Mardiyem, an Indonesian survivor

Personal Information

- 1) Year of Birth: 7 February 1929
- 2) Place of Birth: Yogyakarta, Central Java

References:

- 1) Interviewer: Koichi Kimura / Eka Hindrati
- 2) Place of Interview: Yogyakarta, Central Java
: Salatiga, Central Java
- 3) Year of Interview: March 25, 1996
: April 21, 2002.
- 4) Recording Form: Cassette recorder.
- 5) Editor of Interview: Koichi Kimura
- 6) Translator: Koichi Kimura
- 7) Photographer: Meicy Sitorus

Background information provided by Akihisa Matsuno:

Indonesia was a Dutch colony and was called the Netherlands East Indies. Japan invaded Indonesia in 1942 and occupied her for three and a half years. The purpose was to obtain petroleum that Japan desperately needed to continue its war against the Allies. The Netherlands was a member of the Allies, and the Japanese military interned Dutch citizens in camps. Meanwhile Japan promised with Indonesian nationalists to grant independence, and mobilized Indonesians for its war efforts under its imperialist slogan of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Millions were recruited as romusha or forced laborers and were sent to various places in Asia occupied by Japan for hard work. Many died overseas. The military also set up comfort stations wherever its troops were stationed. Korean, Indonesian and Dutch women were confined in those comfort stations. After the war, when they returned to the community that was patriarchal and religiously strict, they were sometimes not admitted. In such a case, they had to live a lonely life in poverty throughout their life.

I am a descendant of a family that served the nobility, educated in the Kraton [royal palace] neighborhood of [the city of] Yogyakarta [in Central Java]. When I was 13 years old, a neighbor named Sus Lenci invited me to become a member of a theatre troupe called Panca Surya, which performed on [the island of] Kalimantan. She promised that I could become a full-fledged artist in Panca Surya. Without my knowledge, Sus Lenci had already registered me [to travel for work] with a dentist named Shogenji, the then mayor of Banjarmasin city [in Kalimantan on the island of Borneo; he had come to Yogyakarta to recruit girls from Java].

About five other girls and I were examined by an Indonesian doctor in preparation for our departure. At Tugu Station [in Yogyakarta], there already were many girls, about 50. We then continued on to Surabaya city [in East Java], from where we boarded a ship called *Nichimaru* for Kalimantan. After a week in there, in Banjarmasin, we were divided into three groups. The first group was to be sent to a Japanese restaurant. The second group, of about sixteen people, was to work at Panca Surya. [The third group of] twenty-four girls, including myself, were taken to an area called Telawang and placed in a new building.

Soon after coming to Terawang, we were taken to the [Japanese] army hospital in Ancasan village in order to undergo [another] medical examination. When we returned to Terawang, we were suddenly forced to serve six men, resulting in a lot of bleeding. Imagine this situation; I was just a 13-year-old girl who, until then, hadn't known anything. I then realized for the first time that this was not a theatrical company but a "Comfort Station (*Ianjo*)." The Comfort Women (*Ianfu*) dormitory manager named Chikada [who was a civilian employee of the Japanese Army] gave me medicine to recuperate. But after that, I was forced to serve ten to fifteen [Japanese] men every day.

I became pregnant in 1943. My pregnancy was discovered when the baby was five months old, and I had not even realized my situation until then. I was taken to Ulin Hospital, and there, I was forced to have an abortion. In the operating room, my belly was repeatedly pushed without anesthesia until the baby came out. My left leg became disabled due to other tortures that were inflicted on me about one month after the abortion.

I was forced to continue as a "comfort woman" for three years. After the Japanese army left, I returned to Yogyakarta with my husband, whom I married in Bandjarmasin. He had been a mercenary for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, and so he had been imprisoned by the Japanese army.
