

## **MIS CPMB Extract of Interrogation 1538 Composite Report on Three Korean Navy Civilians, List No. 78, Dated 28 Mar 45, Re “Special Questions on Koreans”**

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/49>

In the 1940s, the Japanese Empire conscripted Korean laborers and utilize them as civilian personnel for the war efforts in the Pacific islands. From June to August 1944, the U.S. Navy occupied the Pacific islands region including Saipan, Tinian, and Peleliu islands, which were the territories previously under Japanese control, and captured Korean POWs on these islands. Those who had highly valuable information were interrogated in multiple locations including the front line and the POW camps in Honolulu, Hawaii. After the value of their information was assessed on Angel Island, California, the POWs were further interrogated at Camp Tracy in California. Once the interrogations in California are completed, the POWs were sent to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin where they were further interrogated, if necessary. The Joint Intelligence Center (JIC), a joint agency of the U.S. Army and Navy, took charge of this process. The Captured Personnel and the Material Branch (CPMB) of Military Intelligence Service (MIS), War Department, took part of it on the side of the Army.

This document is a report on the interrogations of three Koreans, Bakdo Lee, Seunggeun Paik, and Kinam Kang on April 11, 1945, based on the special questions for interrogation of Korean POWs. These three POWs were captured in the Pacific islands, imprisoned in a camp in Honolulu, Hawaii, and then sent to the camp in California as they were considered to have high level information. Due to the injuries, these POWs were hospitalized in Letterman Hospital close to Camp Tracy and the interrogations were conducted in the hospital.

For the “comfort women” related questions, the POWs stated that all Korean “comfort women” (“prostitutes” in the original document) whom they saw in the Pacific Islands region were volunteers or had been sold by their parents into prostitution. However, these statements do not seem to have reflected the reality accurately. Based on another interrogation report on Bakdo Lee, one of the POWs, was not in a position to have accurate information about the domestic circumstances of Korea because even though he was born in Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea in 1925, he moved to Osaka, Japan to go to middle school, then traveled to Sakhalin and Honshu in the 1940s, and eventually was conscripted in April 1944.

Even for those who lived in Korea, it would have been difficult for them to obtain accurate information about “comfort women,” because the Government-General in Korea punished anyone who allegedly spread rumors regarding the “comfort women.” This aspect is confirmed by the fact that another POW, Giyeon Kim, could not answer the questions about “comfort women” in his questionnaire. According to these reports, POWs stated that “direct conscription of women by the Japanese would be an outrage that the old and young alike would not tolerate.” It appears that the U.S. forces paid attention to Koreans’ anti-Japanese sentiment in relation to the forced conscription of Korean women as “comfort women.”

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