

Official War Diary Task Unit 94.5.3, Headquarters, Island Command Peleliu

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/77>

This document is a war diary of the U.S. forces, dated February 5, 1946, when the U.S. forces occupied Peleliu Island, Palau. Japan had occupied Pacific islands including Caroline Islands (where Palau is located), Northern Mariana Islands, and Marshall Islands since November 1914. After taking over the previously German-held territories, Japan secured natural resources in the regions as well as routes for the Japanese military to advance to the Pacific. At the time, Japan called its colony in the Pacific “South Seas Mandate,” meaning islands in the southern seas. Palau was at the center of Japan’s colonial rule in the South Seas Mandate and where the South Seas Government headquarters were located starting in 1922. As Japan occupied the South Seas Mandate since the First World War, many Koreans migrated to those islands. The number of Koreans in the region rapidly increased in the late 1930s due to the forced mobilization of Korean laborers beginning in 1939. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, the Japanese Navy controlled this area, in replacement of the South Seas Government. As the Pacific Islands increasingly turned into battlefields, soldiers and “comfort women” were dispatched there. Under this circumstance, many Korean laborers and “comfort women” who were forcibly mobilized by the Japanese Empire remained in the “South Seas Mandate” by the end of the WWII.

This war diary contains a list of evacuees from Babelthuap, the largest island of Palau, as of January 1946. According to the document, Koreans were evacuated by ships on several occasions and returned to Busan (p. 1). Section 5 “Medical Activities” (p. 3) shows that some Koreans who were identified as “labourers” on the list were actually “comfort women.” This section describes the situation after “comfort women” returned to Korea. It states that “[E]vacuation of large numbers of civilian Japanese nationals, including Okinawans, Koreans, Formosans, has occurred during the month. The evacuation of Korean women, a large number of whom were practicing prostitution, has lessened the probability of venereal disease among U.S. military personnel.”

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