

SA Korean “comfort women” captured by the U.S Troops in Burma Myitkyina 1

Annotation Source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive

Annotation and Image Link: <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/134>

This is a scene depicting a Chinese-American intelligence officer Captain Won-Loy Chan and other officers with “comfort women” who were captured and became prisoners of war. The officers were in charge of the POWs in Myitkyina, Burma. This was photographed on August 14, 1944 by Shearer, a member of the Army’s 164th Telecommunications Photographic Corps. Japan, which started war with the Allied Forces in 1941 with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, began to take over Burma (now Myanmar), as well as Southeast Asia colonies of the Allied Forces such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In May 1942, Myitkyina, a major city in northern Burma, was captured, putting the entire Burma under Japanese occupation.

Burma was a strategically important area for both the Japanese and Allied Forces, as the only supply route (Rangoon, Burma; Kunming, China) was located here through which the Allied Forces could support China’s Chiang Kai-shek. After Japan occupied the area in 1942, more than 100,000 Japanese troops entered Burma, and the “comfort stations” were established in almost all major cities. Just to count the number of the “comfort stations” that appear in the diary of a former “comfort station” manager, the total comes to 27, including 8 in Rangoon, 1 in Mouulmain, 5 in Pegu, 6 in Fromm, and 3 in Aqap in Burma. It is estimated that many of the “comfort women” there were Koreans. When the Allied Forces began to attack Burma in 1944, not only the Japanese soldiers but also Korean “comfort women” were captured as prisoners.

The women in the photo are Korean “comfort women” captured by the Allied Forces in Myitkyina, Burma in August 1944. Captain Chan wanted to obtain enemy military information from these women, but most of them did not speak Japanese fluently, so he did not get much help from them. He detailed several episodes of the interrogation process in his memoir, *Burma: Untold Story* (1986). The photo was taken at a temporary camp installed at the airfield west of Myitkyina where these women stayed. The U.S soldiers on the left in the photo are, from the front, Lieutenant Won-Roy-Chan, Sergeant Robert Honda, Sergeant Grant Hibarayama and Sergeant Howard Hurumoto. The 20 women sitting on the right are Korean “comfort women,” and there are other pictures of them. They were captured on August 10, stayed here for five days, and sent to Redo on August 15.

The results of the interrogation of these women were written in two reports. One is 〈Japanese Prisoners Interrogation Report No. 49〉, produced by the U.S Office of War and Information Services (OWI), and the other is 〈Psychological Warfare Bulletin No. 2〉 by the British Southeast Asian Translation Interrogation Center (SEATIC). According to the two reports, these women were brought to Burma in 1942 without knowing that they were going to a “comfort station” by employment fraud or coercion by the contractors who were commissioned by the Japanese military, and stayed at the Kyoyai “comfort station” (also known as the Maruyama comfort station) among the three “comfort stations” in Myitkyina.

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